NEW

GREAT POWERS WERE DEFENCELESS: INVASION OF POLAND

Bringing History to Life

Night of the Long Knives

The Nazis' first bloodbath

Hitler's third grab for power

The birth of the Third Reich

THE THIRD REICH

PREPARED FOR WAR

ARMS RACE

Germany took the lead in Europe's military buildup

JEWS HAD TO WEAR THE STAR

Holocaust began in Nuremburg

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German tactic left Europe on its knees

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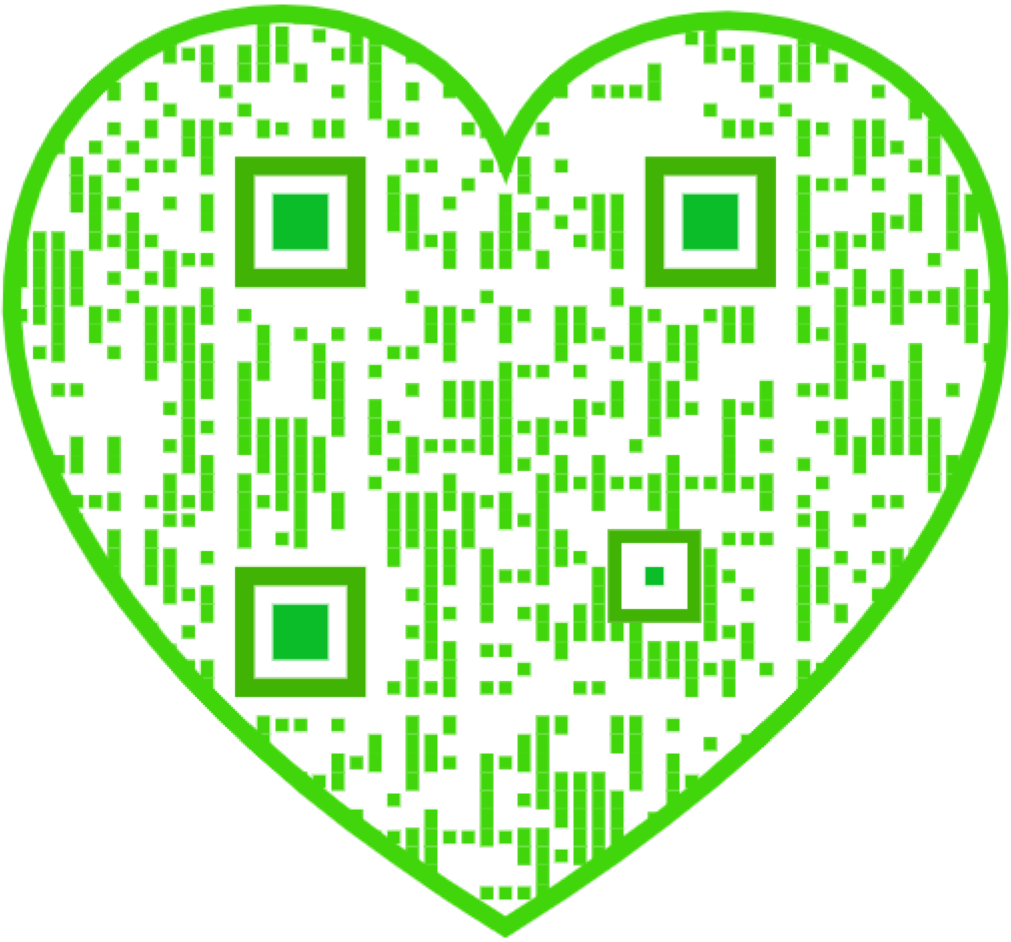
HITLER'S MISTAKE: GIANT FLAK TOWERS SHOULD HAVE SAVED BERLIN



Hitler led the world to war

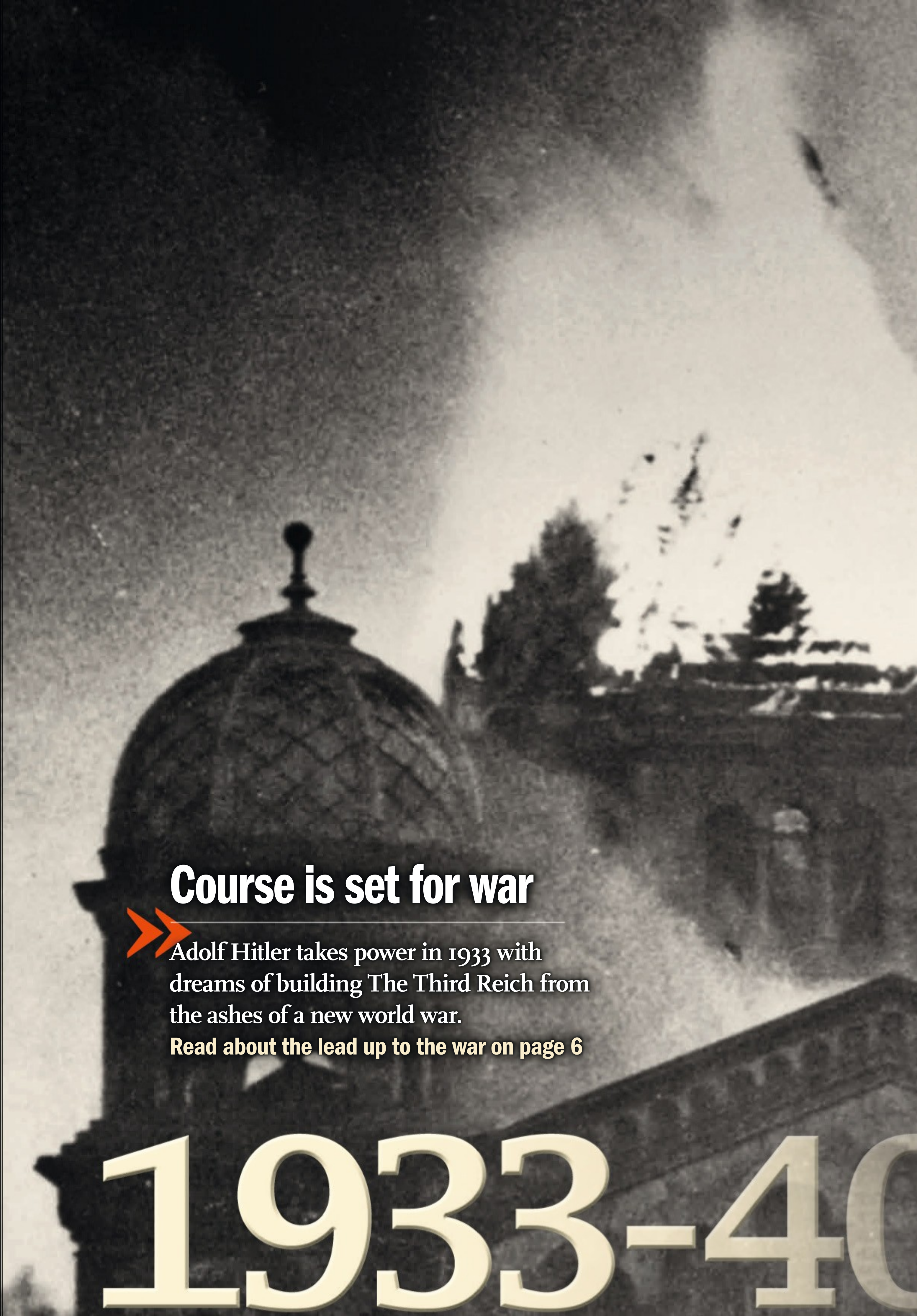
In 1933 Adolf Hitler seizes power after seducing the German people with lavish promises of restoring order, prosperity and the Greater German Reich to its former glories.

He then goes to on exploit other Western European powers' fear of confrontation to rearm the country in direct defiance of the restrictive terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

Before his neighbours can react, Hitler has transformed Germany's armed forces into the most modern war machine of the day.

And Hitler is not alone. He allies himself with Mussolini's fascist Italy, Stalin's communist Soviet Union and – on the other side of the world – the military dictatorship of Japan, which shares Germany's expansionist vision.

This issue of *Bringing History to Life* follows the dramatic buildup to World War II. Enjoy!



Course is set for war

Adolf Hitler takes power in 1933 with dreams of building The Third Reich from the ashes of a new world war.

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1933

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Adolf Hitler becomes the chancellor and leader of Germany.

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Nations needed a way out of economic depression.

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Innovative new mobile-war tactic sweeps aside all opposition.

112 **Giant Flak towers will save Berlin**
Germans build huge concrete fortresses to defend the capital.

Hitler becomes the new Chancellor of Germany

30TH JANUARY, 1933 After six months of political chaos, in which the Reichstag has been paralysed by political infighting while communists and fascists fight in the streets, 85-year-old President Paul von Hindenburg decides that only the Nazi party leader, Adolf Hitler, is strong enough to bring the German people together and restore order.

4TH FEBRUARY: German president Paul von Hindenburg restricts freedom of the press.

15TH FEBRUARY: an assassination attempt is made on US president-elect Franklin D Roosevelt after a speech delivered in Florida.

28TH FEBRUARY: the German Communist Party is banned.

13TH MARCH: Joseph Goebbels becomes Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, launching a huge campaign against Jews.

27TH MARCH: Japan leaves the League of Nations.

1ST APRIL: SS-Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler becomes the head of all state political police departments across Germany.

1ST APRIL: Germans boycott Jewish shops.

26TH APRIL: Jewish students expelled from German schools.

2ND MAY: trade unions are banned in Germany.

2ND MAY: Mahatma Gandhi begins a 21-day hunger strike against British rule in India.

14TH JULY: all political parties except the Nazi party are outlawed in Germany.

Movie monster rages

3RD MARCH: The movie *King Kong* premieres in New York.

President prohibits gold exports

28TH AUGUST US President Franklin D Roosevelt forbids gold exports. Then he effectively nationalises the country's gold mines. The new laws are designed to alleviate the Great Depression. Other countries also use increased state intervention as a way out of the crisis.

14TH OCTOBER: Germany officially withdraws from the League of Nations.

17TH OCTOBER: Albert Einstein and his wife flee Germany.

12TH NOVEMBER: the Nazis receive 92 percent of the votes in the German Reichstag elections.

29TH NOVEMBER: Japan bans Communism.

SS grows

13TH DECEMBER The SS grows its numbers from around 50,000 to 204,000 in one year. SS-Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler restricts membership so only the best candidates are admitted.

1933

26TH JANUARY, 1934: the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact is signed. Both countries pledge to forgo any armed conflict for the next 10 years.

10TH FEBRUARY: the first Jewish immigrant ship from Germany arrives in Palestine.

12TH FEBRUARY: violent rebellion breaks out in Austria.

26TH MARCH: Great Britain introduces a practical driving test before motorists are allowed to drive. The license was introduced in 1903, but the test isn't enforced until 1934 following 7,343 road deaths.

Dust Bowl wreaks havoc

13TH MAY: violent dust storms ravage the American Midwest. Prolonged drought is followed by storms that blow up giant dust clouds of dry soil from large areas of depleted agricultural land. The Dust Bowl forces tens of thousands of farmers to abandon their farms and head to the cities.

15TH MAY: fascist Karlis Ulmanis becomes the dictator in Latvia.

19TH MAY: the military seizes power in a coup in Bulgaria.

9TH JUNE: Duck first appears in print in the cartoon *The Wise Little Hen*.

10TH JUNE: the Geneva Disarmament Conference collapses, after Hitler withdrew Germany from negotiations.

Night of the Long Knives

30TH JUNE Adolf Hitler has been in power for almost 18 months. But his plans still face opposition from non-Nazi officers, bureaucrats and politicians. Most dangerous, however, is the internal opposition from his own party. The commander of the SA Corps, Ernst Röhm, challenges Hitler, and Hitler decides to deploy his loyal SS bodyguard.

Luftwaffe

1ST OCTOBER: establishes the Luftwaffe, in direct violation of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

16TH OCTOBER: Mao's Communists begin 'The Long March' – a 370-day flight through China.

10TH DECEMBER: Latvian dictator Karlis Ulmanis sets up a KZ camp for political opponents.

1934

Beer in a can

24TH JANUARY, 1935: first canned beer, Krueger Cream Ale, hits the market in the US.

KRUEGER
CREAM
ALE

28TH JANUARY: Iceland is the first Western nation to legalise abortion – in cases of rape, incest, poverty, or if the mother's life is in danger.

26TH FEBRUARY: Hermann Göring is appointed head of the German Luftwaffe.

22ND MARCH: blood tests are accepted as evidence in court proceedings in New York City.

12TH APRIL: Germany prohibits the publication of any book written by non-Aryan writers.

Metro in Moscow

15TH MAY: the Moscow Metro opens its first line from Sokolniki in the eastern suburbs to the centre. The approximately five-kilometre-long line is the first of ten, which was started in 1933.

12TH JULY: Belgium recognises the Soviet Union and they open diplomatic relations.

13TH JULY: the US and Soviet Union conclude the first trade agreement after the Revolution.

11TH AUGUST: demonstrations in Germany against Jews.

Antisemitism becomes law

15TH SEPTEMBER After just over two years in power, Germany's dictator and his Nazi party now hold absolute power. At the Nazi party's annual rally in Nuremberg, Hitler reveals two new laws to protect the German Reich against the "Jewish threat" and pave the way for a pure, Aryan master race that Hitler dreams of creating.

2ND OCTOBER: Mussolini's Italian army invades Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia).

10TH OCTOBER: the League of Nations condemns Italy's invasion of Abyssinia.

20TH OCTOBER: Mao's Long March ends in Shaanxi, China.

20TH OCTOBER: 200,000 Spaniards demonstrate in Madrid against fascism.

9TH DECEMBER: students in Beijing, China, revolt against Japan's occupation of Manchuria and northern China, urging their compatriots to resist the threat of Japanese imperialism.

1935

16TH JANUARY ,1936: in Spain, socialists, communists and anarchists join in the *Frente Popular,* (the Popular Front).

6TH FEBRUARY: the 4th Winter Olympics opens in Germany at Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

26TH FEBRUARY: Adolf Hitler unveils Porsche's new car – the small Volkswagen.

26TH FEBRUARY: unsuccessful military coup in Japan.

5TH MARCH: the first Spitfire plane takes to the air in Southampton.

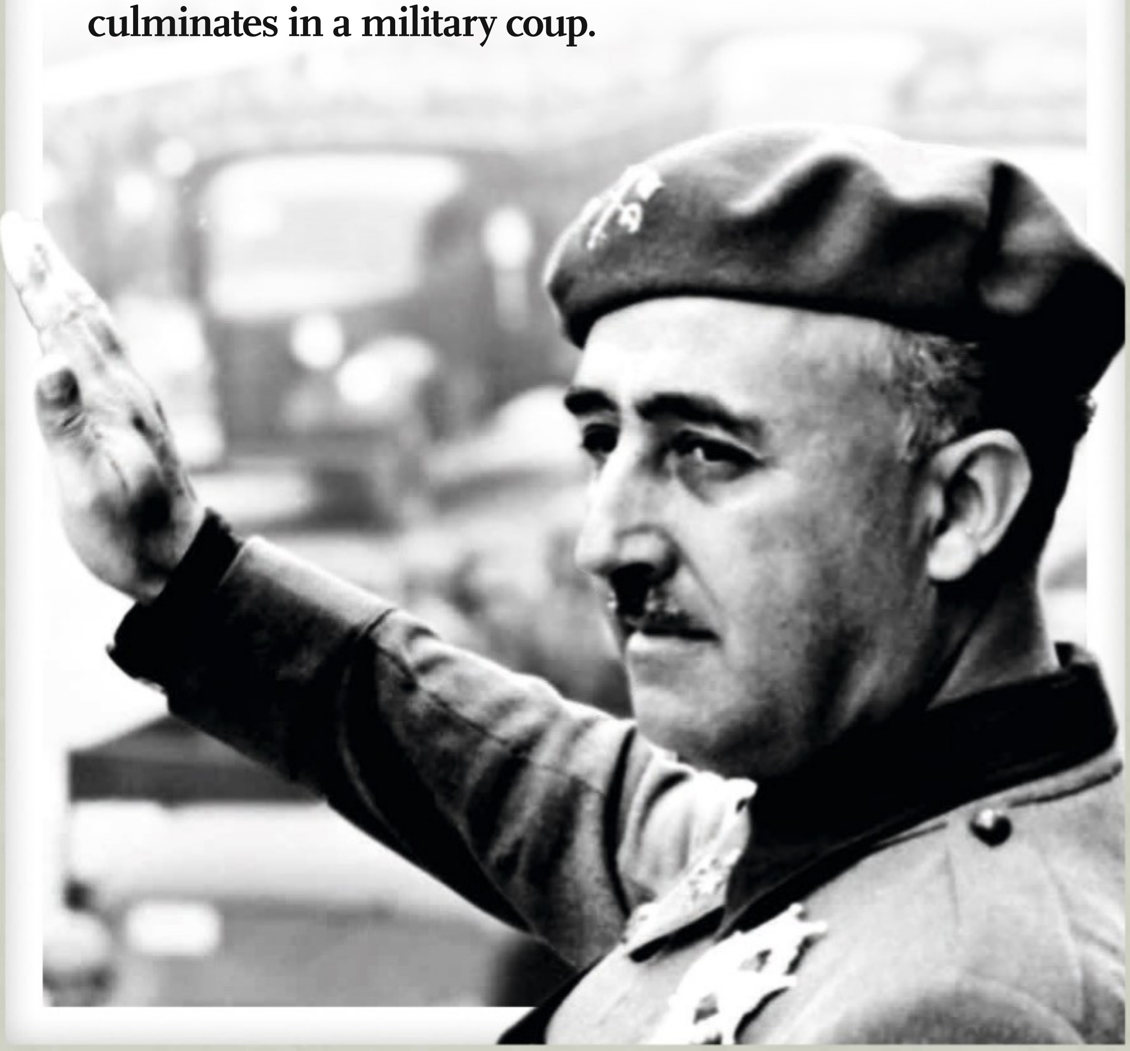
7TH MARCH: Hitler violates the terms of the Treaty of Versailles by deploying German troops to the demilitarised Rhineland.

13TH APRIL: General Ioannis Metaxas proclaims himself Greece's dictator.

26TH APRIL: after criticism from Stalin, Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich withdraws his newly composed Fourth Symphony – the work is finally premiered in 1961.

Spanish generals launch coup

17TH JULY Spain's nascent socialist government introduces reforms, which leads to unrest in the army. At the same time, old divisions widen between left-leaning republicans and conservative nationalists. The unrest culminates in a military coup.



Italy becomes an empire

9TH MAY Italy occupies Abyssinia, and Italian leader Benito Mussolini proclaims that Italy has finally got its empire.

18TH JULY: General Franco leads his Spanish forces in Morocco in a rebellion against the Spanish government.

26TH JULY: Germany and Italy, join the Spanish Civil War on the side of the Nationalists and General Franco.

Stalin purges all opponents

AUGUST The first Moscow Trial takes place in which Joseph Stalin's former associates, Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev, are accused of conspiring with Leon Trotsky, who was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1929.

1936

9TH JANUARY, 1937: Italy's government forbids marriage between any Abyssinian and an Italian.

30TH JANUARY: Stalin cleanses Trotskyists in the second round of Moscow Trials.

16TH FEBRUARY: DuPont, a United States company patents a new material: nylon.

21ST FEBRUARY: the League of Nations prohibits volunteers from participating in the Spanish Civil War.

26TH APRIL: German aircraft bomb the Basque city of Guernica in Spain.

28TH MAY: Neville Chamberlain becomes the Prime Minister in Great Britain.

Brothers at the races

11TH JUNE: the Marx Brothers movie *A Day at the Races* is premiered. The film is the seventh in the series of 13 films that are filmed between the years 1929-49 with the Marx brothers in the starring roles. The brothers are sons of German-Jewish immigrants.

Japan rolls into China

15TH JULY Japan invades China and Shanghai and Nanjing are the first to fall after fierce battles, where Japanese soldiers commit a series of brutal massacres.

24TH AUGUST: in Spain, the Basque Country surrenders to Franco's nationalist troops.

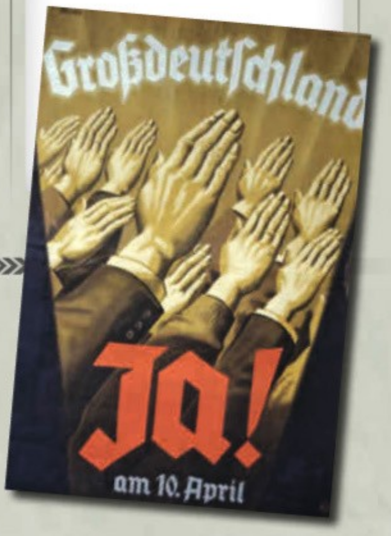
25TH SEPTEMBER: Benito Mussolini visits Hitler in Berlin.

5TH NOVEMBER: Hitler, secretly reveals his plans for future war to senior military and foreign policy figures.

11TH NOVEMBER: the new Messerschmitt ME-109V1 fighter plane sets a new speed record of 610.4 km/h.

Posters got the message out

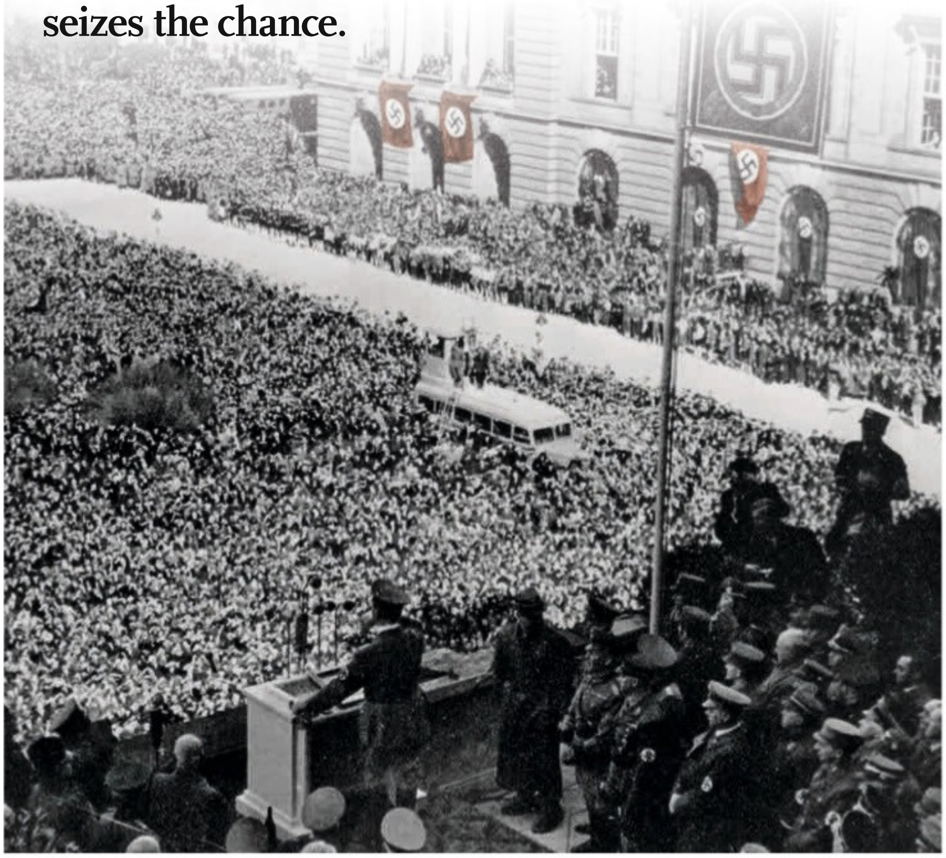
NOVEMBER In the 1930s nation states conveyed messages to the populace through posters sporting simple slogans. In Germany, new campaigns for Nazi party policy were launched every winter, and in the US the New Deal idea was promoted through posters.



1937

Hitler's easiest victory

13TH MARCH, 1938 In the 1930s, a series of bloody riots prompts the Austrian chancellor to introduce a Catholic-national dictatorship. Austria is impoverished and unemployment is high. Many Austrians – not just Nazis – want the country united with Germany, which has benefitted from great economic progress since Hitler took power. Hitler seizes the chance.



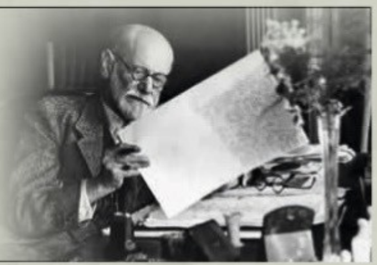
18TH MARCH: Mexico nationalises its oil companies, including foreign-owned ones.

5TH APRIL: violent riots against Jews in Poland.

10TH APRIL: Austria formally becomes a German state.

Refugee from Vienna

6TH JUNE: Jew Sigmund Freud arrives in London as a refugee from Vienna. Jewish purges are in full swing following Austria's assimilation into Germany.



12TH SEPTEMBER: Adolf Hitler demands independence for the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia.

14TH SEPTEMBER: the *Graf Zeppelin II*, the world's largest airship to date, flies on its maiden voyage.

27TH SEPTEMBER: the League of Nations condemns Japan's aggression against China.

29TH SEPTEMBER: the Munich Agreement determines that Czechoslovakia must accede to Germany's demands and give up the Sudetenland region.

30TH SEPTEMBER: Prime Minister Chamberlain declares that the Munich agreement ensures "peace for our time".

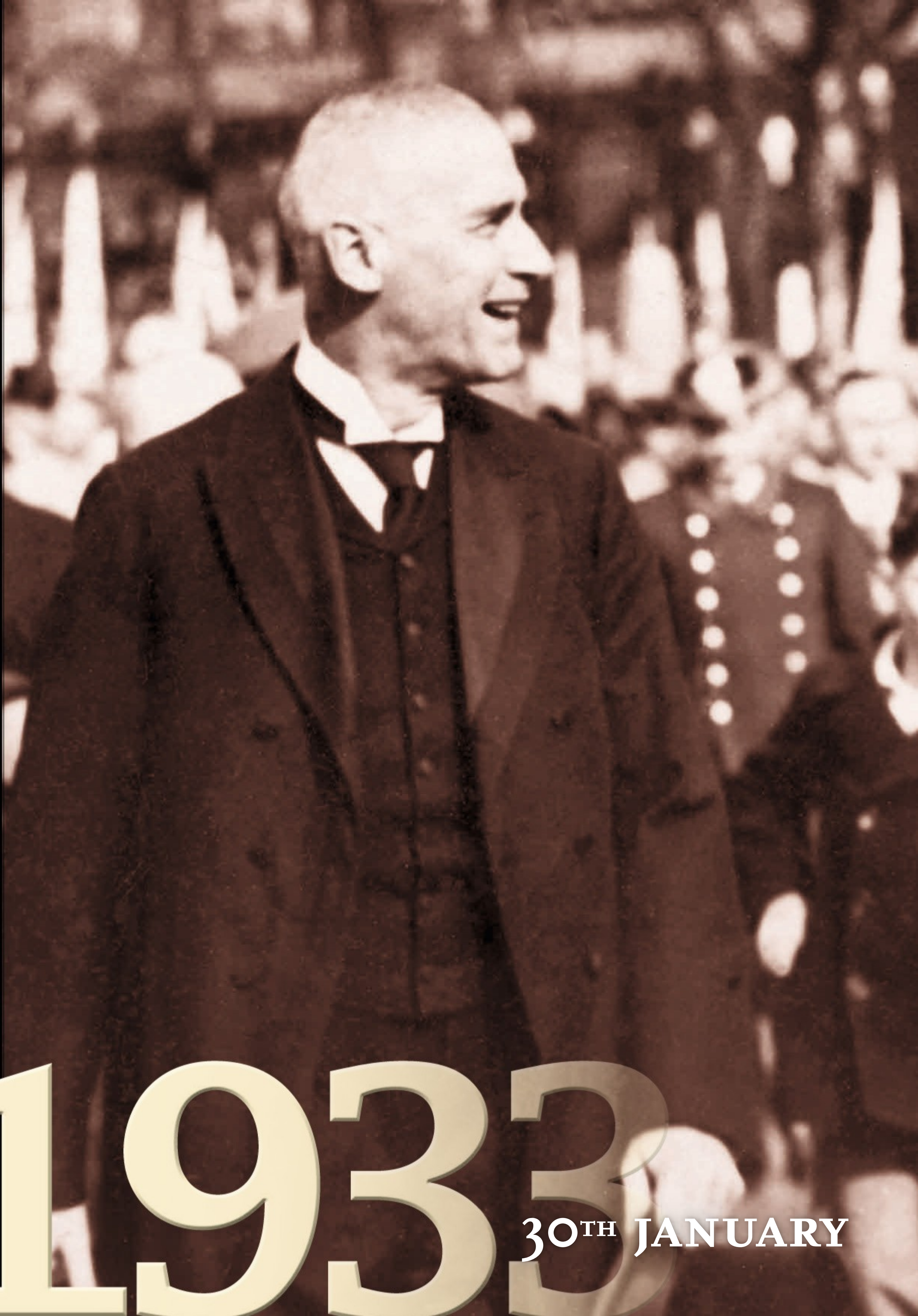
Crystal Night

9TH NOVEMBER German authorities allow German Nazis and civilians to storm Jewish homes, shops, and synagogues, many of which are plundered and burned to the ground. Jews have no legal protections in Nazi Germany.

Weapons race in Europe

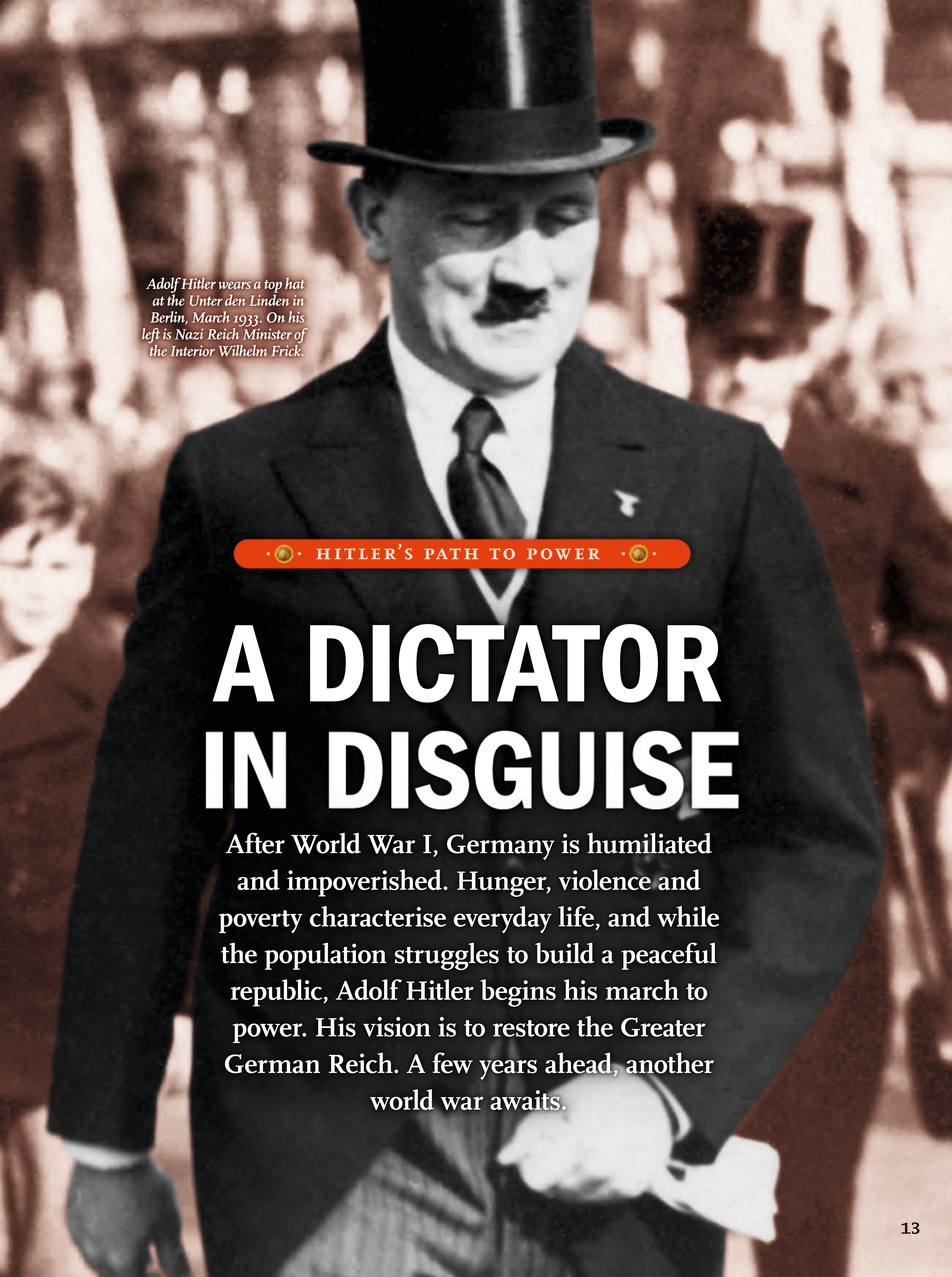
DECEMBER a new series of Messerschmitt Bf 109s leave the factory. Germany's rearmament takes off in the air, while under the water its U-boats dominate.

1938



1933

30th JANUARY



Adolf Hitler wears a top hat at the Unter den Linden in Berlin, March 1933. On his left is Nazi Reich Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick.

HITLER'S PATH TO POWER

A DICTATOR IN DISGUISE

After World War I, Germany is humiliated and impoverished. Hunger, violence and poverty characterise everyday life, and while the population struggles to build a peaceful republic, Adolf Hitler begins his march to power. His vision is to restore the Greater German Reich. A few years ahead, another world war awaits.

Berlin, 1933

THE STAGE IS SET

Berlin
GERMANY

Adolf Hitler is being sworn in as German chancellor. After months of political chaos, during which the parties in the Reichstag block all democratic solutions, 85-year-old President Paul von Hindenburg decides that only Hitler is strong enough to form a coalition and maintain order in the country.

The winter sun shone over the Reich Chancellery as Adolf Hitler left the building as Germany's new chancellor. Just a few years before, he'd been considered an upstart – someone the political elite looked down on with contempt: "the Bohemian corporal" as President Hindenburg dubbed him. Following the elections of 30th January, 1933, the roles were reversed, and Hindenburg was forced to accept him as the country's new leader.

Wearing a top hat and frock coat in the crisp winter light, Hitler was ready to take on his role as a statesman.

A crowd of his most faithful supporters waited to commemorate the event at the Hotel Kaiserhof, opposite the Reich Chancellery. Hitler beamed with joy and pride, and when he met the crowd in the hall, he had tears in his eyes, an eyewitness reported later.

Celebrations continued that evening when 25,000 members of the Sturmabteilung (SA) party militia sang as they marched through the Brandenburg Gate up to the Reich Chancellery. The flames from their torches shone on their highly polished boots and their flickering glow also lit up German flags. In front of the Reich Chancellery, the crowd were exuberant as they united in cries of "Sieg Heil!".

As the cheers grew in strength, Hitler appeared at one of the lighted windows and raised his arm in greeting.

Throughout the country, from Flensburg in the north to Munich in the south, people eagerly turned on their radio to follow the events broadcast live from Berlin. Hitler's appointment as chancellor could be heard across the whole of Germany that evening, as Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels had forced it on to state radio.

All Germans would be made to realise that something new was happening. Hitler would do away with the old regime, which in his opinion was based on "stupidity, mediocrity, half-hearted positions, cowardice, weakness and inadequacy", and Germany would be lifted out of poverty and humiliation following its defeat in World War I. Goebbels was still ecstatic when, after midnight, he left the Reich Chancellery "in an insensate tumult of enthusiasm".

Hitler was relieved that the big day had finally come. "What was most amazing about his life, he declared during this period, was that he was always being saved when he himself had already given up," historian Joachim Fest said.

After 14 years of political aspirations – with the last four years like one long gruelling election campaign – Hitler had finally come to power. All the struggles he had experienced finally seemed worth it.

A gifted but lazy boy

Hitler was born on 20th April, 1889 in Braunau am Inn in Upper Austria. His father, Alois Hitler, was a straight and very particular customs official.

Adolf and his father were permanently at loggerheads, as Alois' ambitions for his son were completely out of sync with what the dreamer Adolf had in mind. The boy never missed an opportunity to tell his father that he would never be confined to a customs office but would enjoy a life free as an artist. His mother Klara was responsible for his care rather than his upbringing, and so enjoyed a close relationship with her son.

When the boy was five, the family moved to Linz, where he spent his school years. Adolf was gifted but lazy. He found it hard to make friends and tried every trick to avoid going to school. At 16, his mother allowed him to leave without taking any exams. Hitler's father had died two years earlier and so no longer exercised any influence over what he did.

Artist's dreams were shattered

Instead of going to school Adolf spent his time daydreaming, drawing, painting and going to the

1889-1945

NAME **ADOLF HITLER**

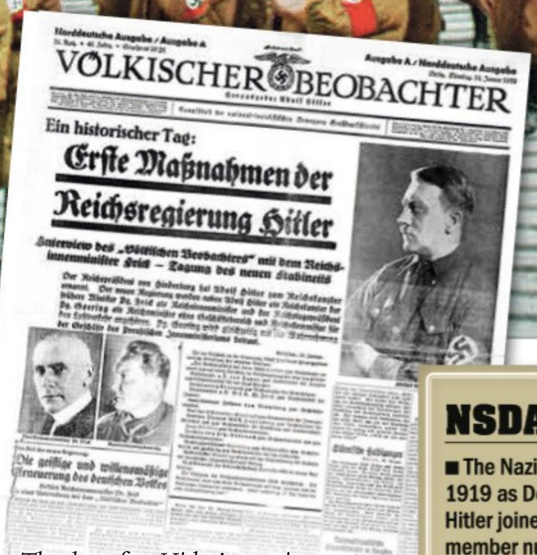
TITLE CHANCELLOR, FÜHRER

Hitler was orphaned young

Adolf Hitler was born on 20th April, 1889 at the Gasthof zum Pommer in Braunau am Inn in Austria. He was the fourth child in a family of six, and four of his siblings died young. His father, customs officer Alois Hitler, was strict, and the Hitler rebelled against his authority early on. In 1903, Alois died, followed four years later by Hitler's mother from breast cancer. The 18-year-old now had to fend for himself.

- **Son of an Austrian customs officer.**
- **Gifted, but lazy in school, which he left without qualifications.**

By 1933, the Nazi SA organisation numbered three million men who liked to march in uniform carrying flags through the streets.



Norddeutsche Ausgabe / Ausgabe A

VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER

Ausgabe A / Norddeutsche Ausgabe

Ein historischer Tag:

Erſte Maßnahmen der Reichsregierung Hitler

Interview des „Völkiſchen Beobachters" mit dem Reichsinnenminiſter Frick – Tagung des neuen Kabinetts

Die geiſtige und willensmäßige Erneuerung des deutſchen Volkes

The day after Hitler's appointment, the newspapers were still free to write about the first steps on the road to abolishing democracy in Germany.

opera. In particular, he enjoyed Richard Wagner's tragedies. When he was 18 years old, Hitler went to Vienna to follow his artistic ambitions. In the early 1900s, the city was a magnificent metropolis. Its streets were filled with people from the vast Austro-Hungarian Empire: Austrians, Hungarians, Poles and other people from the kingdom's Slavic areas. Art, culture and architecture flourished. Hitler was thrilled with big city life. He spent hours admiring the buildings and often went to the opera.

Then, everything changed. After twice failing the entrance examination to the Academy of Fine Arts, Hitler was told that he would never become a painter. He'd left school with no qualifications, so he was unable to pursue the opportunity. Without it, he couldn't follow his dream – lacking any direction of purpose, he drifted.

It was during this period that Hitler discovered the 'other Vienna', with its simmering discontent and a feeling that the old empire would be overthrown. After his mother's death, he was initially well provided for, but Hitler was frustrated. Feeling unappreciated, his personal animosities were fuelled by what he saw and heard from his shabby life as he descended into the "darkness of flophouses and homes for men".

HITLER'S ANTISEMITISM WAS WOKEN

Like many others who search for an external reason for their personal failure, Hitler came to view the Jews as the culprits. The Jews had joined forces to destroy Austria. Propaganda was destroying the working class's love for its country, luring workers into International Marxism. Hitler was obsessed by Jews and Communists in equal measure, "for only in the brain of a monster – not that of a man – could the plan of an organisation assume form and meaning, whose activity must ultimately result in the collapse of human civilisation and the consequent devastation of the world", he later wrote.

Hitler was not alone in his antisemitism. Vienna's mayor Karl Lueger combined social welfare with nationalism and antisemitism – a cocktail reminiscent of Hitler's later brand of national socialism. Lueger was a powerful speaker and could touch the 'man in the street' with his simple messages.

Hitler was politically awakened and inspired by Lueger's eloquent speeches. Another source of inspiration was social democracy. which used propaganda to mobilise the masses.

UNTRAINED GERMANS RISKED DEATH

Sick and tired of Vienna and the city's cosmopolitan disorder, Hitler travelled to Munich in Germany,

FACTS

NSDAP

- The Nazi Party was founded in 1919 as Deutsche Arbeiterpartei. Hitler joined the same year as party member number 55.
- The party changed its name to the Nationalsozialist Deutsche Arbeiterpartei in 1920.
- The party's first programme was the "25-point plan", which included a rejection of the Treaty of Versailles' conditions for Germany.
- 2,000 people attended the party's first mass meeting in 1920. Hitler became party leader in 1921.
- In 1933, the NSDAP had around two million members, which grew to 5.3 million by 1939.

HITLER'S TIMELINE

FAILED ARTIST BECOMES CHANCELLOR

1889 Adolf Hitler is born in Braunau am Inn in Austria.

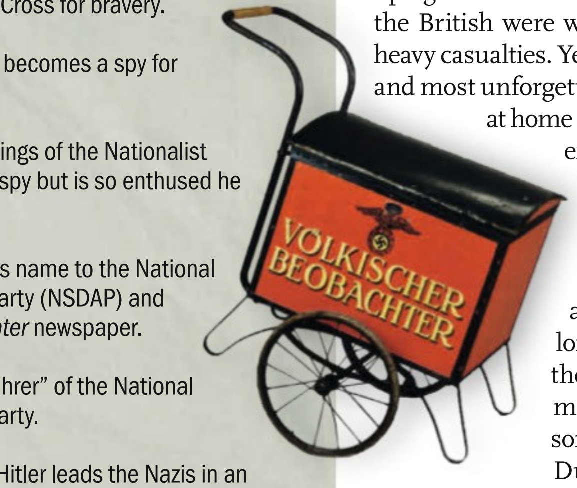
1907 Vienna's Academy of Fine Arts rejects Hitler.

1914 World War I breaks out. Hitler, despite his Austrian citizenship, is allowed to fight for Germany. He serves as a runner and receives the Iron Cross for bravery.

1918 After the war, Hitler becomes a spy for German Army intelligence.

1919 Hitler attends meetings of the Nationalist German Workers' Party as a spy but is so enthused he joins the party.

1920 The DAP changes its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) and buys the *Völkischer Beobachter* newspaper.



1921 Hitler is elected "Führer" of the National Socialist German Workers' Party.

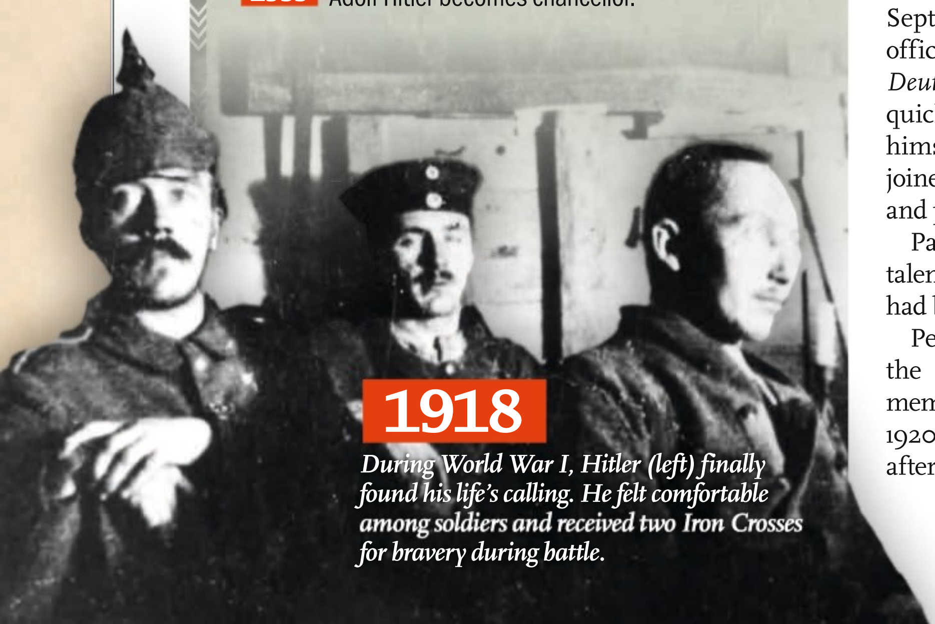
1923 On 8th November, Hitler leads the Nazis in an attempted coup, the so-called "Beer Hall Putsch" in Munich. It ends disastrously.

1924 Hitler is sentenced to five years' imprisonment for high treason but is released after only nine months. By the time of his release he's written the book *Mein Kampf*.

1929 After the stock market crash on Wall Street in New York, unemployment in Germany rises fast, and millions of dissatisfied Germans join the Nazis. At the parliamentary election, the Nazis become the country's second largest party.

1932 Franz von Papen forms a minority government, but unrest and riots spread throughout the country.

1933 Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor.



1918

During World War I, Hitler (left) finally found his life's calling. He felt comfortable among soldiers and received two Iron Crosses for bravery during battle.

where he continued his reverie while trying to make a living from his painting. But then reality intervened.

On 1st August, 1914 Germany declared war on Russia and soon after, World War I became reality. Hitler enthusiastically volunteered for military service and joined the Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment 16. After almost ten weeks of training, the regiment was sent to the Western Front and thrown into one of the war's first bloody battles – the Battle of Ypres in October 1914. Eyewitnesses told how young untrained Germans full of confidence and arm-in-arm, went up against the British, singing patriotic songs. By contrast, the British were well-prepared, and the Germans suffered heavy casualties. Yet, Hitler described the war as "the greatest and most unforgettable time of my earthly existence". He felt at home with soldiers and in a fight where he could excel for a great cause.

Hitler was on the Western Front for four years. He was awarded his second Iron Cross in 1918, which was unusual for a lance corporal. He was also well-liked among his colleagues but was also a bit of a loner. He could become lost in thought and then plunge into long monologues about military strategy – which his peers sometimes found inappropriate.

During one of the last British gas attacks, Hitler was blinded and had to be treated in hospital. It was here that he was told that Germany had surrendered. The announcement came as a shock, and Hitler – by his own admission – threw himself on his bed, buried his head in the pillow and wept.

HITLER DISCOVERED HIS SPECIAL TALENT

After the war, Hitler sought refuge with his regiment in the barracks in Munich, where he tried to come to terms with the new world order. The Kaiser had abdicated, and Germany attempted to become a republic. But it was weak from the beginning and found democracy threatened by armed troops and frequent revolts.

Hitler felt a strong hatred towards the *Novemberverbrecher* (November criminals), politicians who he felt had undermined Germany's fighting strength and forced the country to surrender. His thoughts revolved around revenge and restoration of Germany's honour.

Unexpectedly, his directionless ideas fell into place in September 1919, when he was working as an intelligence officer, assigned to keep an eye on the small nationalist *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German Workers' Party). Hitler quickly abandoned his role of observer, eagerly throwing himself into the political discussion. A month later, he had joined the party and became responsible for its recruitment and propaganda.

Party work restored Hitler's confidence and he discovered a talent for speaking. His claim that the Jews and Communists had betrayed the German people resonated with many.

People cheered when Hitler flew into a passionate rage over the Treaty of Versailles and Germany's downfall. Party membership grew steadily, and Hitler's breakthrough came in 1920, when over 2,000 attended a public party meeting. Shortly after, the party changed its name to *Nationalsozialistische*

D.A.P.-NATIONALSOZIALISTISCHE

Mussolini was role model

Hitler admired Mussolini. He copied his speeches, his party uniforms and even his coup attempt, yet “Il Duce” gave him the cold shoulder.

At first, the Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini had nothing but contempt for the “savage barbarism” of Adolf Hitler, and for more than 10 years refused to meet him.

His dismissive attitude irritated Hitler, who admired Italian culture and ancient Roman architecture and wanted a part of it. He felt a deep, Aryan kinship with Mussolini and copied several of his ideas. Nazi stormtroopers (SA) dressed in brown shirts were inspired by the fascist “blackshirts”, and the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923 was copied from Mussolini’s seizure of power in Rome and his own theatrical appearance at a lectern was taken from “Il Duce”.

Mussolini was amazed when Hitler seized power in 1933, and the following year agreed to meet the German upstart. Yet, it was only in 1935 – when Italy invaded Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) and faced international disapproval – that the “Pact of Steel” was formed between the two countries.

Although Hitler was soon disappointed by the Italians’ lack of fighting spirit, he continued to support his role model, Mussolini.

IDOL
APPRENTICE

Hitler watched Mussolini speak on camera so that he could study the effect.

Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP, or National Socialist German Workers’ Party), adopting the swastika as its symbol.

“Beer Hall Putsch” went badly wrong

In 1921 Hitler, now the NSDAP leader, was in the process of ensuring members received standard badges, armbands and flags. He also established the SA Corps, who marched in the streets to attract sympathisers and intimidate Nazi opposition. The fledging republic was weakened by conflict over the Ruhr region, which France and Britain occupied in reprisal for the Germans defaulting on war reparation payments. This, along with galloping inflation, had led to local uprisings erupting.

Hitler took particular notice of how, in 1922, Benito Mussolini had come to power in Italy, by leading his partisans in the infamous “Blackshirts” march on Rome. The current regime in Germany was hardly more viable than the government “Il Duce” had overthrown, so Hitler planned to seize power in similar fashion by marching on Berlin.

The first step would be a coup in the Bavarian capital, Munich. In the evening of 8th November, 1923 Hitler stormed into the Bürgerbräukeller beer hall, fired his pistol in the air and declared that the national revolution had begun. He’d failed to garner sufficient political support, however, and during the night the Bavarian authorities secured the city against a Nazi takeover. Hitler had expected an easy victory and the following day marched his men through the town. The marchers were greeted by the Bavarian police, who opened fire killing 14 Nazis.

Nazis chose democracy

Hitler had made a mistake: it was obviously not yet time for a Nazi revolution. Instead, he was charged with treason. Hitler pleaded not guilty. He argued that his actions had been empowered by the existence of traitors – he'd simply acted in the national interest. Hitler found a receptive audience – even the judges accepted his motives and praised his nationalism. He was sentenced to five years in prison, but after about a year was released for good behaviour.

Hitler had to admit that he would have to work within the law if he wanted to seize power. He began to rebuild the Nazi party, which had almost disintegrated during his absence. The trial made him a household name and he acquired many new supporters, so was still able to pull in full houses for his inflammatory speeches. Every so often he crossed the line – one observer remarked that Hitler’s rhetoric was »

“Without [qualifications], he couldn’t follow his dream – lacking any direction of purpose, he drifted.”

like a violent assault – and he was banned from making speeches in much of Germany. But he still spoke to private audiences and used the years from 1925 to 1928 to set up groups all over the country, establish the party on a national basis and bring in influential people like Joseph Goebbels.

As a legal party, the Nazis first gained representation in the Reichstag in the May 1924 election, but it wasn't until November 1929 after the Wall Street Crash that they began to gain traction. The German economy collapsed and by 1932 over six million were unemployed – around 33 percent of the workforce.

The progress experienced by the Germans throughout the 1920s went into reverse, and confidence in politicians waned as they failed to address the worsening crisis. The Nazis seized the opportunity, using their well-oiled propaganda machine to launch an attack on Germany's faltering democracy. Hitler became the party's most effective weapon as he took on the role of Germany's saviour.

KZ camps were created in 1933 for opponents of the Nazi regime. The first, Dachau, was initially used to imprison Social Democrats and Communists.

Germany's saviour descended from the sky

When, between April and November 1932, he took part in 148 rallies with his *Deutschlandflug* (flight over Germany), the image of Hitler as Messiah was complete. The gatherings, which often drew audiences of 20,000-30,000, were reminiscent of religious revival meetings, when the Führer came down from the sky to speak to the people.

This was reinforced on the night in 1933, when Hitler became Chancellor of the Reich in a euphoric celebration, "The Führer, the Prophet, the Fighter… The last hope of the masses, the shining symbol of the German will to freedom," as Goebbels put it.

Hitler was now the leader of a coalition government, which in no way satisfied his ambitions. He had no intention of ruling at the mercy of others, and instead wrote out another election manifesto. The mood of the population could be used to secure his position as the country's new leader, and in the elections on 5th March, 1933, 51.9 per cent of voters chose to support a new, Hitler-led government of Nazis and their allies.

For the Germans, it was the last chance to go to the polls: immediately after the election, Hitler started to break down democracy. On 23rd March, the Nazis adopted a so-called "Enabling Act". Implementation of this law made it possible for Hitler to rule without parliament or a president – now he was sole ruler of Germany.

Hitler promised British "peace for our time"

Britain and France wanted to avoid another war with Germany at all costs. WWI had demanded huge sacrifice, and until 1939, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain stuck by his appeasement policy. He allowed the Germans to take the Czechoslovakian province of Sudetenland and Hitler promised to curb further expansion. Hitler signed the agreement for "peace for our time", but the document Chamberlain waved on his return to London was worth nothing. The following year, Hitler occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia and invaded Poland.

British leader Neville Chamberlain accepted Adolf Hitler's false pledge for peace.

Hitler formed the Nazi state

In every way, Hitler sought to cast Germany with a unity of purpose that he'd fantasised about during his early years in Vienna, and which he had glimpsed on the muddy fields of Ypres. "We all have unbounded confidence, for we believe in our nation and in its eternal values. Farmers, workers, and the middle class must unite to contribute the bricks wherewith they build the new Reich", he enthused. Nazification was all-consuming – all parties other than the NSDAP were banned, all police and courts came under Nazi control, trade unions and employers' organisations were merged into the Nazis' Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF) labour organisation.

During 1933, 50,000 communists and socialists were imprisoned or sent to the newly created concentration camps. Under the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, Jews were deprived of their civil rights, and three years later, the Nazis staged *die Kristallnacht* (the Crystal Night), attacking thousands of Jews.

Hitler became "just a soldier"

In the mid-1930s, Hitler prepared to confront the Treaty of Versailles again, this time to reinstate Germany's honour. He planned to gather all ethnic Germans across Europe together to create a *Lebensraum* (living space) for its growing population. But he also wanted war for war's sake.

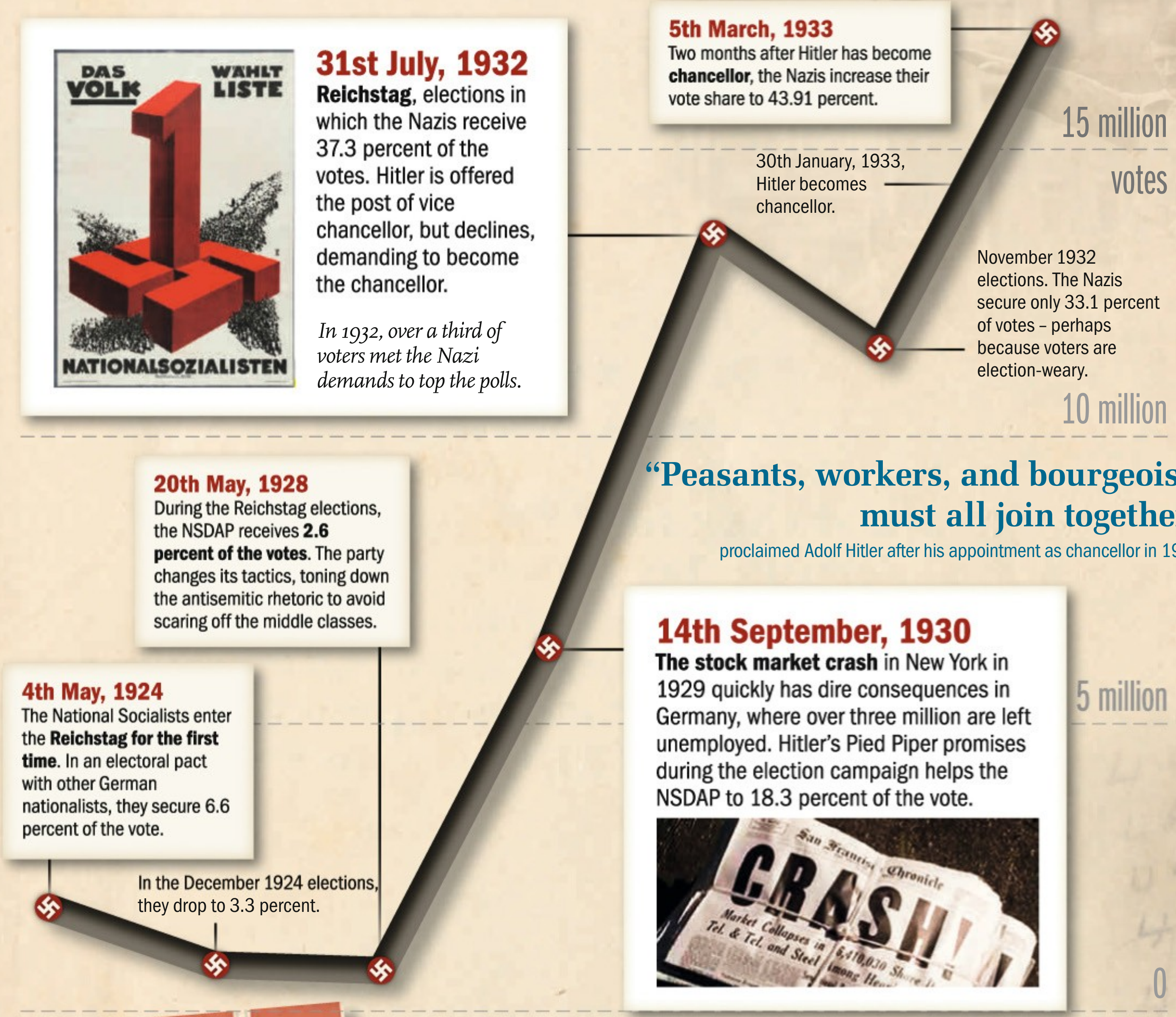
Based on his own experiences, he announced the reintroduction of military conscription, "a wonderful education we wish to confer upon the upcoming young German generation". In 1936, the country was heavily rearmed; with nearly half of all public expenditure put to military purposes.

Austria was first on his wishlist, and for Hitler it was a great personal victory when in 1938, the country's citizens voted for the so-called "Anschluss" to become part of Germany. The following year, he occupied Czechoslovakia without any meaningful international opposition.

On 1st September, 1939, German troops rolled into Poland. Based on earlier ultimatums, Britain and France declared war. Hitler gleefully took on the role as a commander: "I am… just a soldier of the German Reich", he declared. "I have once more put on that coat that was the most sacred and dear to me. I will not take it off again until victory is secured".

Voters handed Hitler power

The Nazis were already represented in the Reichstag in 1924, but in early years the party had few seats. It wasn't until the economic crisis hit Germany that it exploded on to the scene. The unemployed were enticed with promises of work, while the middle classes viewed the Nazis as a bulwark against communism.



4th May, 1924
The National Socialists enter the **Reichstag for the first time**. In an electoral pact with other German nationalists, they secure 6.6 percent of the vote.

In the December 1924 elections, they drop to 3.3 percent.

20th May, 1928
During the Reichstag elections, the NSDAP receives **2.6 percent of the votes**. The party changes its tactics, toning down the antisemitic rhetoric to avoid scaring off the middle classes.

14th September, 1930
The stock market crash in New York in 1929 quickly has dire consequences in Germany, where over three million are left unemployed. Hitler's Pied Piper promises during the election campaign helps the NSDAP to 18.3 percent of the vote.

31st July, 1932
Reichstag, elections in which the Nazis receive 37.3 percent of the votes. Hitler is offered the post of vice chancellor, but declines, demanding to become the chancellor.

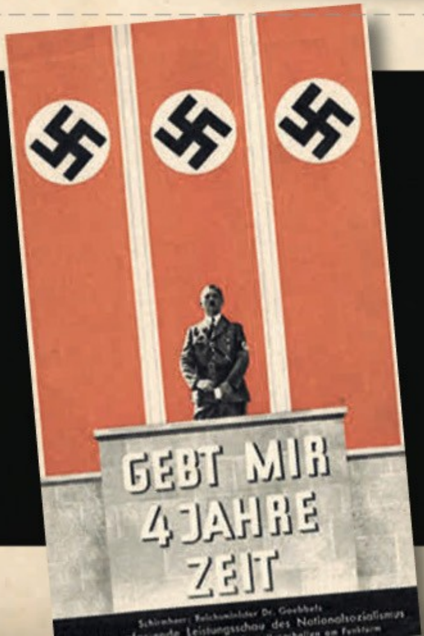
In 1932, over a third of voters met the Nazi demands to top the polls.

November 1932 elections. The Nazis secure only 33.1 percent of votes – perhaps because voters are election-weary.

30th January, 1933, Hitler becomes chancellor.

5th March, 1933
Two months after Hitler has become **chancellor**, the Nazis increase their vote share to 43.91 percent.

> "Peasants, workers, and bourgeoisie must all join together"
>
> proclaimed Adolf Hitler after his appointment as chancellor in 1933.



Hitler becomes dictator

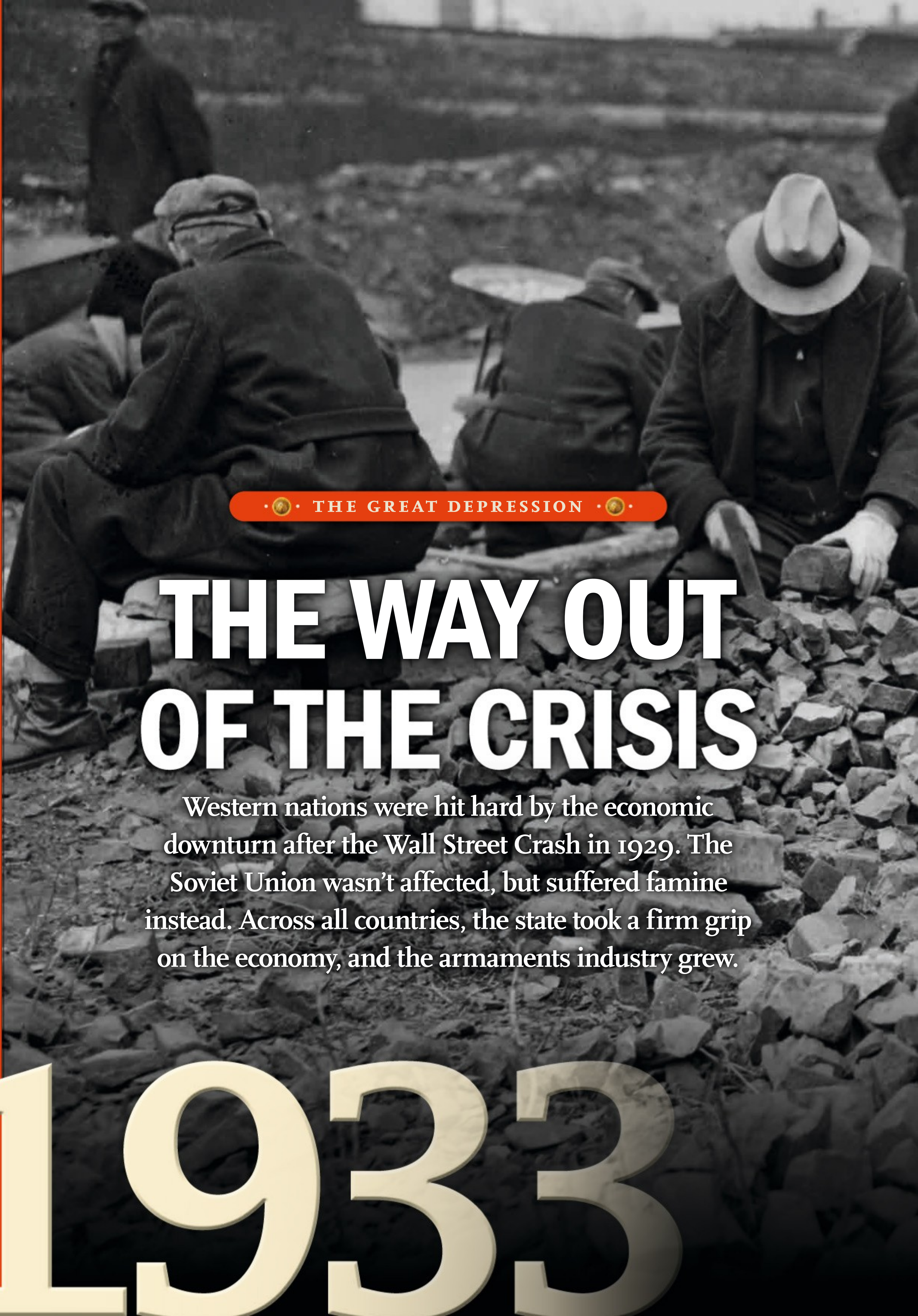
When Hitler gains power, he swiftly enacts laws to concentrate all power with him.

23rd March, 1933: the Reich chancellor is empowered to enact laws for the next four years.

2nd May, 1933: all workers and employers must join the Nazis' Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF) labour organisation. One month later, all other political parties are banned.

16th May, 1934: Hitler promises to restore the German army whose officers, in return, promise to support Hitler for president.

2nd August, 1934: 86-year-old President Paul von Hindenburg dies. The government passes a law conferring all the presidential powers to the chancellor, including supreme command of the army. Hitler takes the title "Führer und Reichskansler".



THE GREAT DEPRESSION

THE WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS

Western nations were hit hard by the economic downturn after the Wall Street Crash in 1929. The Soviet Union wasn't affected, but suffered famine instead. Across all countries, the state took a firm grip on the economy, and the armaments industry grew.

1933

Former businessmen in suits were forced to perform heavy manual labour in one of the many projects designed to lift the US out of depression.

FACTS

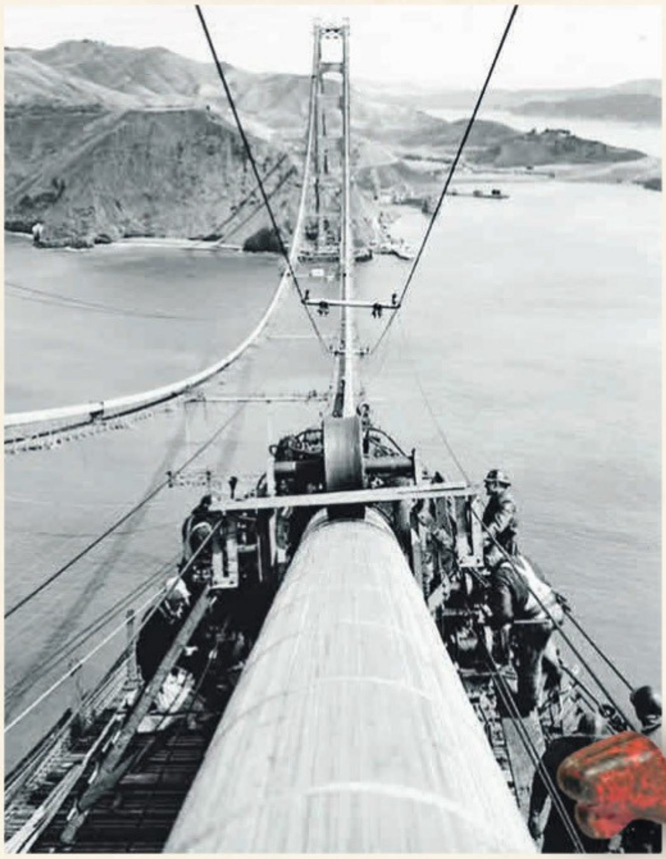
SHARE BUBBLE TRIGGERED 1930S GREAT DEPRESSION

- The 1920s boom saw securities trading give rise to enormous returns and led to people speculating in stocks with no real value.
- In the late 1920s, stock prices began to fall. Shares were sold at a loss, and they could no longer be used as collateral for bank loans.
- In the autumn of 1929, everyone tried to sell their shares, and stocks plummeted to the final crash on 24th October, when Wall Street banks had to close because their coffers were empty.
- Germany and the US were hit the hardest, but most of the world was affected when international trade stalled.

USA

Roosevelt led recovery

When Franklin D Roosevelt became President of the United States, he immediately introduced a large number of reforms and utilities, known as the 'New Deal'. The reforms provided support to the third of the population most severely affected by the crisis, set minimum prices for agricultural produce to ensure better revenue for farmers, and launched a large number of public construction projects to put people in work. In just a few years, Works Progress Administration projects helped three million back to work.



The Golden Gate Bridge *was built between 1933 and 1937. Its construction was made possible because the Bank of America paid 50 percent of the bridge's cost of $35 million ($514m in 2018 prices).*

This cast-iron digger toy *with movable grab was a favourite toy among boys in the 1930s.*

USA
WORK
PROGRAM
WPA

The President's wife *Eleanor Roosevelt speaks to the head of a project under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) New Deal program in Iowa, where the city of Des Moines is in the process of transforming its dump into a waterfront park.*

ВИЇЗНА РЕДАКЦІЯ РАЙГАЗЕТИ „КОЛГОСПНИК ЖАШКІВЩИНИ" НА ЖНИВАХ
В К-ПІ
С. ВІЛЬШАНКА
ПРОЛЕТАРИИ ВСЕХ СТРАН, СОЕДИНЯЙТЕСЬ!
ПЕРЕХІДНИЙ

The Soviet Union's breadbasket *was Ukraine, but when it forced peasants to join large-scale collective farms the reorganisation caused chaos. Initially it was impossible to manage the large operation efficiently, resulting in famine.*

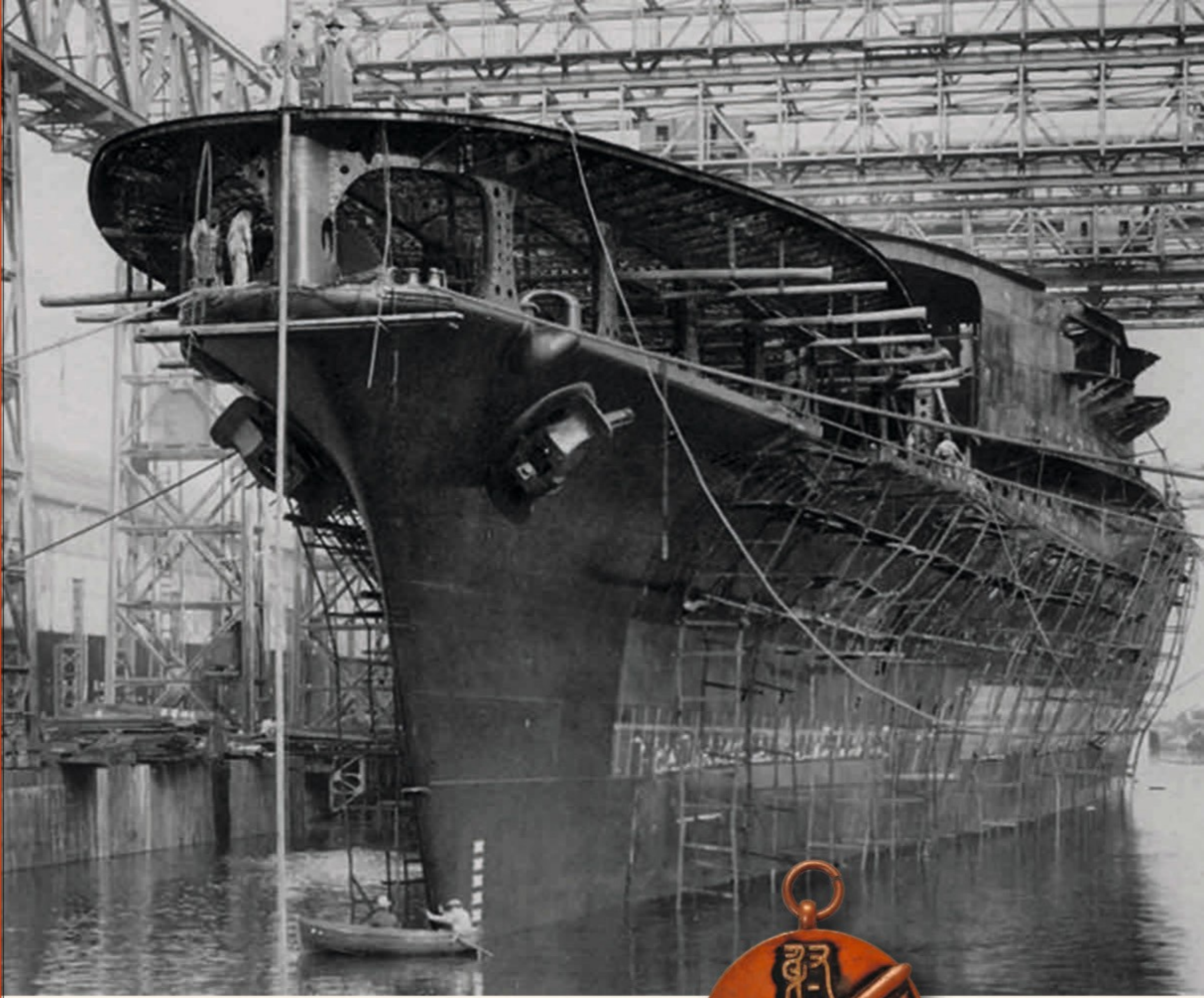
In 1933, Russians *were first to reach the stratosphere – 19 km up in a balloon. Stalin invested in science and technology despite the country's lack of food.*

SOVIET UNION

Russians starved

In the 1930s the Soviet Union was the world's only communist state. The country was speeding up its industrialisation and modernisation, but with minimal foreign trade they weren't particularly affected by the economic crisis, which was viewed as a capitalist phenomenon. Stalin's forced collectivisation of agriculture, however, triggered a famine in 1932-33, killing over six million.

Starving farmers *went to big cities where they tried to find work. Often, they ended up begging on the street instead, and many died from hunger.*



Aircraft carriers like Akagi *were produced rapidly in Japan's shipyards. The ship went to war against China in the 1930s and attacked the US Navy Base at Pearl Harbor in 1941. Akagi was sunk during the Battle of Midway in 1942.*

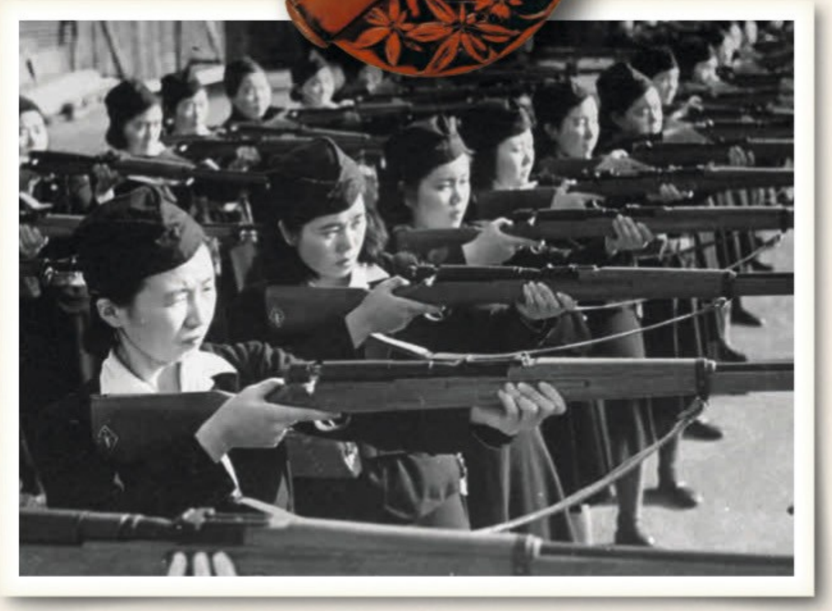
Students received medals *if they took part in extra weapons training.*

JAPAN

The solution of war

The crisis hit Japan particularly hard, not least on exported goods where their value fell by over 50 percent between 1929 and 1931.

Japan was a military dictatorship, and the regime's solution to the crisis was to invade China where there was a market for Japanese goods, plus agricultural land and iron ore for the empire's rapidly growing industries. Society was modernising in leaps and bounds and children were brought up to be completely obedient.

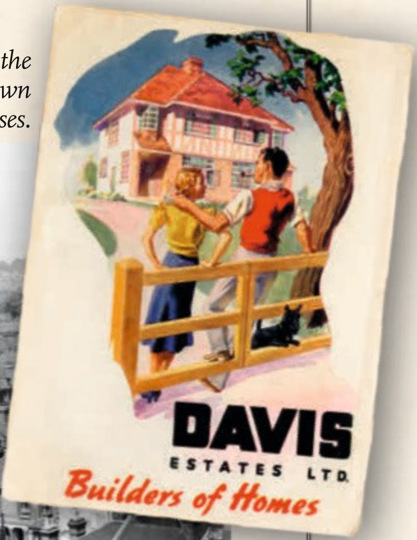


Schoolgirls *earned to fire rifles and use bayonets in close combat. All Japanese – including those on the home front – were mobilised for war in the 1930s.*

GREAT BRITAIN

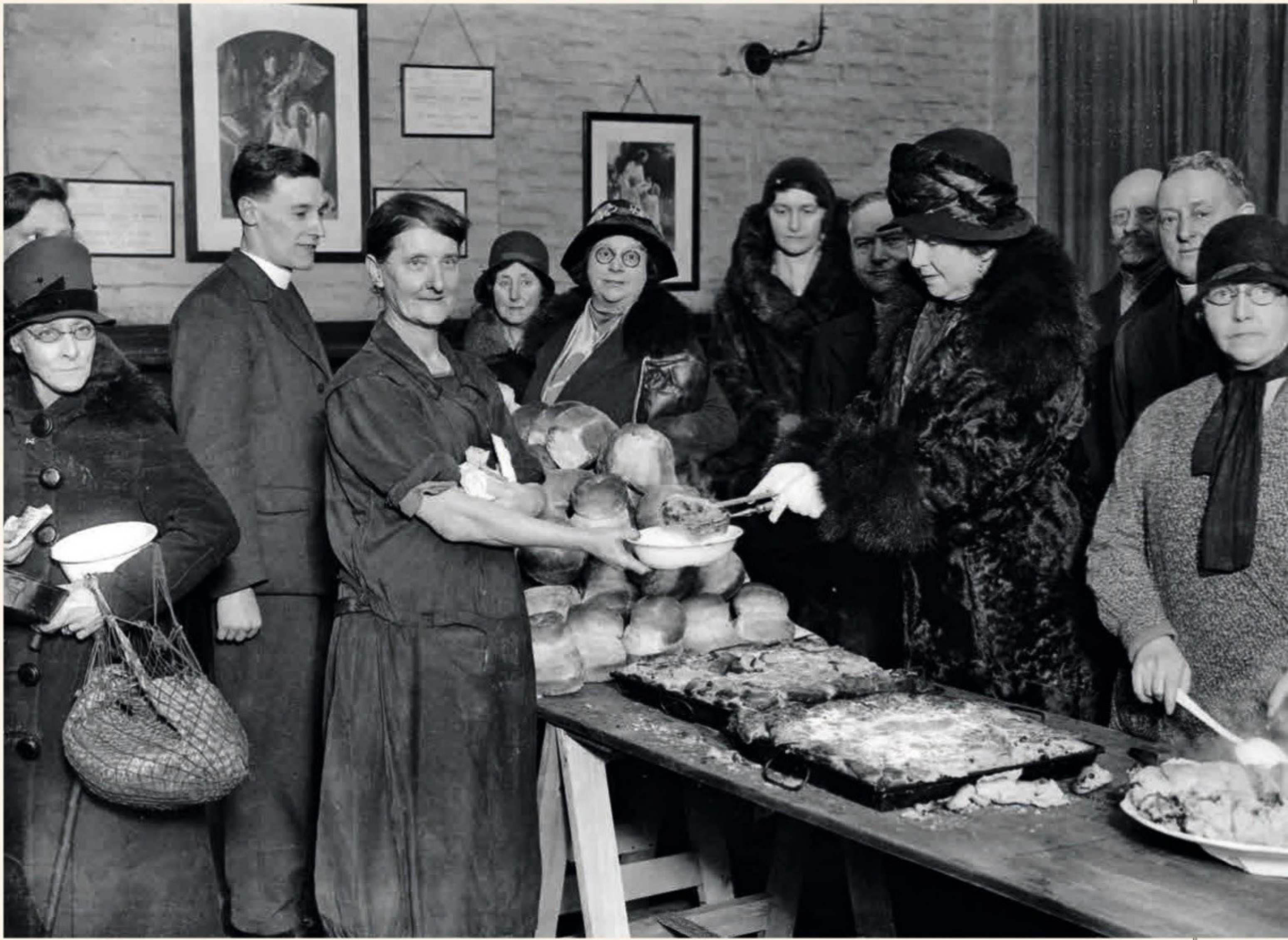
The welfare state grew in response to the crisis

Despite the crisis, Britain expanded her welfare state in 1931 to provide support for all unemployed. Northern England's industrial and mining areas were particularly affected with unemployment reaching 70 percent in the 1930s.
But in the south, a housing boom took off in the mid-1930s, where new developments of single-family homes for the middle classes grew in London's suburbs. The middle class also kept the UK automotive industry alive and were customers for new industries, such as electric toasters and water boilers.



Full-colour ads *sold the dream of owning their own home to the middle classes.*

Government-backed *cheap bank loans in the mid-1930s to allow the British to buy their own house. It created a boom, and London's suburbs grew.*



Soup kitchens *shot up in Britain in the early 1930s. For war veterans, children from poor families and the unemployed, it became a daily routine to queue up for a bowl of soup and a crust of bread.*

The long straight columns of black SS uniforms prompted admiring glances during the Nazi annual rallies in Nuremberg.

1933

NAZI ELITE CORPS

HITLER'S BLACK GUARD

From its beginnings in 1925, the SS was the Nazi movement's elite corps. Its members underwent relentless training and Nazi indoctrination, which taught the recruits to blindly follow Adolf Hitler. The SS could get away with anything – they could even get away with systematic mass murder.

Berlin, 1933

THE STAGE IS SET

Berlin
GERMANY

Adolf Hitler has taken power in Germany and eradicated democracy. He is preparing extensive campaigns to expand the German Reich. But the Nazi party's paramilitary wing of stormtroopers has grown, and its leader is hungry for more power. Hitler's responds by deploying the SS Corps, his own blindly loyal bodyguard.

From it's very beginnings, in the years following World War I, the Nazi party (NSDAP) had a corps of thugs who went around beating up those who opposed the party. The *Sturmabteilung* (Storm Detachment, or SA) – also known as "stormtroopers" or "brownshirts" – were recruited from among party members who were willing to fight the country's communists.

While Hitler languished in prison in 1923 after being convicted for his role in the failed *Bürgerbräu-Putsch* (Beer Hall Putsch), the SA grew. In a short time, the corps went from 2,000 to 30,000 members. Hitler was impressed – but also afraid that the growing SA would threaten his power.

He therefore ordered his driver, Julius Schreck, to form an elite bodyguard unit – the *Schutzstaffel* (Protection Squadron, or SS).

The initial order stated that individual units – spread across German cities – be small in size, with one commander in charge of a *Zehnerstaffeln* (groups of ten). Men were selected based on various criteria, including age (23-35 years old only), health, sobriety and be locals with at least five years' standing.

Most importantly, SS members declared their complete loyalty to Hitler. The oath, which was introduced a few years later, said: "I vow to you, Adolf Hitler, as Führer and chancellor of the German Reich, loyalty and bravery. I vow to you and to the leaders that you set for me, absolute allegiance until death. So help me God."

In 1925, the Schutzstaffel – its name drawn from the air force – was in place. During party meetings and election campaigns, the bodyguard of faithful party soldiers protected Hitler with their lives. Among its first members were Rudolf Hess, Hermann Göring and a little later Heinrich Himmler – men who would become important in the Nazi party and within the Third Reich.

Stormtroopers threatened Hitler

Four years later, Heinrich Himmler became SS-Reichsführer and put in charge of around 280 SS soldiers. Himmler wanted to create "a National Socialist order of soldiers of Nordic race" who would blindly follow every one of the Führer's orders. Officially, however, the SS was a small *Gruppe* (battalion) of the SA, who actively opposed its growth.

When Hitler took power in Germany in 1933, the SA had more than 400,000 members. The paramilitary organisation had become an independent force within the Nazi party. SA leader Ernst Röhm had political ambitions and wanted to exercise that power. In 1934, for example, he proclaimed that the SA should be merged with the army – with him at its head.

During the Night of the Long Knives Hitler arrested a number of senior SA members. They were led away under the supervision of two significant SS men: Sepp Dietrich, later commander of the 1st SS Panzer Division "Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler", and Theodor Eicke, who took charge of the 3rd SS Panzer Division "Totenkopf".

With the SA neutered, the SS could finally develop. And yet: the *Wehrmacht* (German army), still took the bulk of all new recruits, and that hindered the SS's growth.

SS became a military force

During the 1930s, the SS went from being a small group of hand-picked bodyguards to a complex organisation with

As the war progressed, SS recruits became younger and younger.

many branches – an independent army, a large bureaucracy and over time also a business operation that exploited slave labour from the concentration camps.

Heinrich Himmler stood at the very top of the organisation, and spread the influence of the SS wherever he could.

Himmler created a whole universe around his organisation, which was integrated into party history and provided it with an independent "ideology", built on medieval mysticism and Nordic mythology as well as Himmler's own racial theories.

The powerful SS-Reichsführer, however, was far from the brave, Germanic warrior, who in his imagination defended the German master race against Jews, Bolsheviks, homosexuals and other subhumans. Himmler was physically weak and had not fought in World War I.

In 1936, Himmler became chief of German police, which together with the SS secured the regime against its internal enemies, while the Wehrmacht defended the borders. Still, the armed wing of the SS – the Waffen-SS – played an insignificant role. Before World War II, Hitler's attitude to an SS army was not clear. However, he attributed great value to the military – not least if in future he wanted the SS to enjoy respect among citizens who'd been hardened by war:

"In our Reich of the future, the SS and police will possess the necessary authority in their relations with other citizens only if they have soldiery character. Through their past experiences with glorious military events and their present education by the NSDAP, the German people have acquired such a warrior mentality that a fat, jovial, sock knitting police such as we had during the Weimar era can no longer exert authority," Hitler predicted. "For this reason it will be necessary for our SS and police, in their own closed units, to prove themselves at the front in the same way as the Army and to make blood sacrifices to the same degree as any other branch of the armed forces," he concluded.

The SS Honour Ring with runes and skulls were meant to give the wearer special powers.

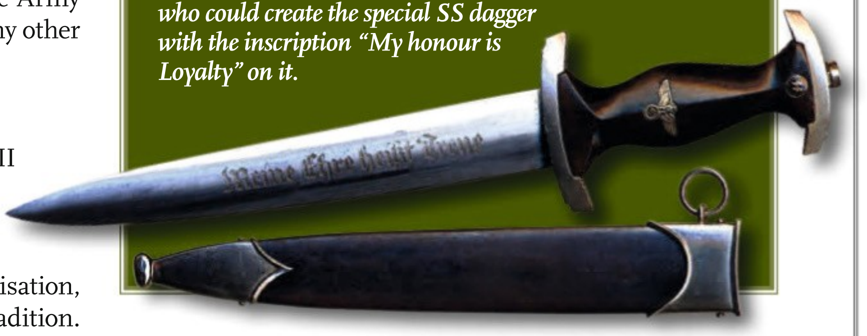
Himmler created an SS cult

The castle at Wewelsburg was established as a sanctuary for high-ranking SS members.

Heinrich Himmler was fascinated by pagan and Nordic mythology. Researchers believe that he saw himself as the spiritual reincarnation of Heinrich I (Henry the Fowler), who defended the proto-German state against Slavs in the 10th Century. Himmler saw the invasion of the Soviet Union as a continuation of Henry's legacy.

By 1934, Himmler had already leased Wewelsburg Castle at Paderborn. Here, his "National Socialist order of soldiers" would have its religious centre. Himmler converted the crypt into a shrine to Heinrich I, while the floor of the SS Generals' Hall was decorated with a "Black Sun" symbol (made up of 12 swastika-like runes). Himmler incorporated runes and medieval symbols into both uniforms and weapons – for example, in the SS Death's Head ring – which Himmler believed would give the wearer psychic abilities. The rings from fallen soldiers were kept in a casket at Wewelsburg.

Himmler set up a school for bladesmiths who could create the special SS dagger with the inscription "My honour is Loyalty" on it.



"Sweat saves blood" was its motto

Although the Waffen-SS fought during World War II alongside the Wehrmacht, the two organisations were fundamentally different. The SS was only a fraction of the Wehrmacht's size, and where it was a relatively young and unabashedly pro-Nazi organisation, the Wehrmacht was steeped in deep historical tradition. Finally, each organisation's recruits came from very different classes. The Wehrmacht mainly attracted well-educated men from the cities, while the Waffen-SS selected its recruits from rural areas. Their inferior education made them more susceptible to indoctrination, but they were also more used to harsh conditions, which was an advantage at the front.

In July 1935, *SS-Hauptamt* (head office) was established, which had the task of organising all parts of the SS. A new inspectorate was set up to monitor military training within the organisation with the intention of training Waffen-SS soldiers to the highest standards.

The man tasked with designing the training programme for the Nazis' new elite army had the motto, "Sweat saves blood". His name was Felix Steiner.

The instructor, who 10 years later would defy Hitler's orders to save Berlin, believed that he could develop a force of battle-ready and mobile elite soldiers. He wanted to create a training programme that emphasised individual responsibility and cooperation – rather than to blindly follow Wehrmacht doctrine. Steiner was inspired by his experiences during World War I, where he had seen *kampfegruppen* (battle groups) – small groups of soldiers who were trained for close combat. The units launched surprise attacks and spread panic throughout enemy trenches.

To create his elite army, Steiner placed an emphasis on his men having a good physique, solid character and weapons training. Training began at 06.00 and continued until late into the night, only interrupted by meals. The tough physical training enabled Steiner's recruits to travel six kilometres in less than 20 minutes wearing full kit. In addition, they had lectures in ideology

204,000 men were members of the SS by December 1933. Its leader, Heinrich Himmler, restricted access so that only the best candidates were allowed to join.

The hard physical training and spartan diet in the SS barracks quickly turned boys to men who gained a reputation among the opposite sex. The Nazi government encouraged marriages between the SS soldiers and healthy German women who could prove they were pure Aryans.

three times a week, including lessons from Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*. One in three students failed this subject.

Elements of Felix Steiner's training programme soon spread to the rest of the Waffen-SS, where officers and men treated each other as equals – very different to the Wehrmacht, which was marked by a tradition-bound hierarchy.

CABIN BOY JOINED THE SS

The training was tough, stretching the recruits to their limits. For young cabin boy Wilhem Roes, the appeal of joining the corps was tantalising. He was drawn in by a recruitment poster which showed a soldier, a strong young man with a gun pressed tight against his proud chest. He wore a steel helmet embossed with SS runes. The boy wanted to be like him.

1896-1966

NAME **FELIX STEINER**

TITLE OBERGRUPPENFÜHRER

Commander built up SS

Felix Steiner was a war hero from World War I, joining the Nazi party in 1933. SS-Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler chose Steiner to build the Waffen-SS and train new members. At the outbreak of the war, Steiner was an Obergruppenführer of the SS Deutschland Regiment, and in 1940 was given the task of creating SS Wiking, a corps of non-German volunteers, including Scandinavians.

- **Surrendered in 1945 outside Berlin.**
- **Charges dropped at the Nuremberg Trials.**

He needed his father's written approval to sign up: "I told him, and he beamed, that his oldest son was going to become a real soldier, in the Waffen SS! Of course he signed it... 1st June, 1942 I turned 17, and on 8th June I was called up." And to his father's great pride, the boy was accepted in the prestigious 1st SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler (LSSAH).

From the first day, the young recruits undertook long runs and exhausting exercises in muddy trenches with their rifle raised above their heads. Every muddy mark left on the weapon was punished with push-ups.

Roes was exhausted and wondered whether he'd made the biggest mistake of his life. He thought life as a soldier would be easier – but he was wrong! The tough and experienced instructors really put the recruits through their paces. The recruits struggled to keep their eyes open during the ideological education in the afternoon, but they dared not shut them, as that would be punished with more push-ups.

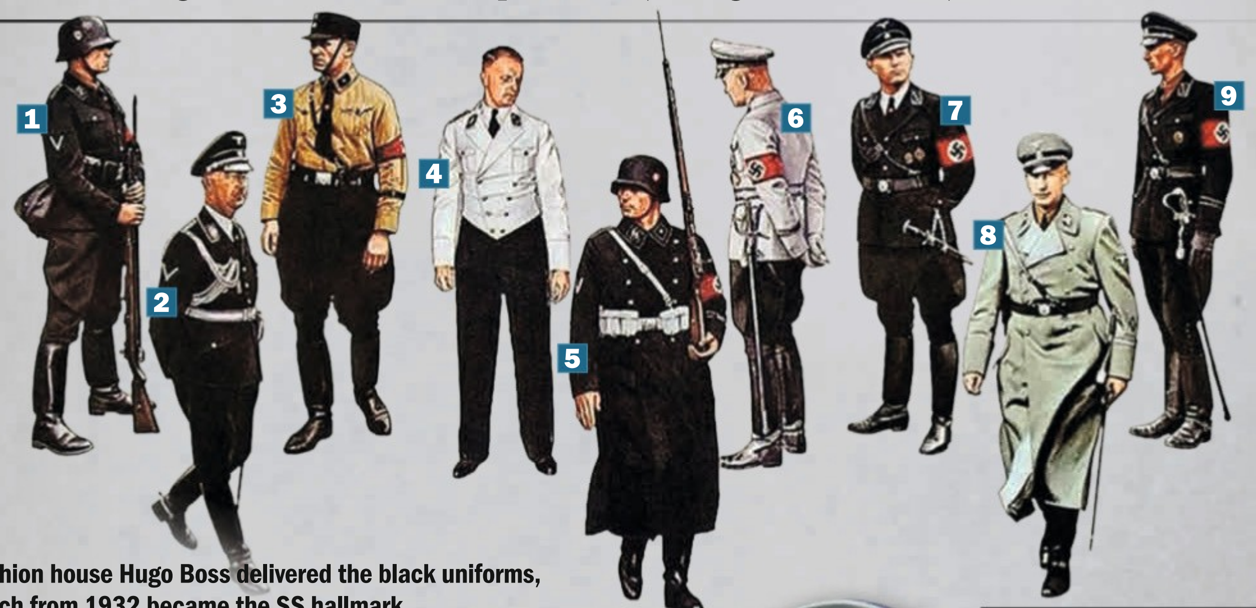
Because of the tough training, however, the recruits developed a strong camaraderie and helped each other through their basic training and the rest of the war. Sweat during training saved blood during the war.

SOLDIERS FOUGHT WITH CONTEMPT FOR DEATH

When Germany invaded Poland on 1st September, 1939, the Waffen-SS had its first opportunity to prove its SS soldiers were as good as any of the other participants in the war. Steiner was commander of the SS Standarte

Ancient Nordic symbols strengthened the corps' morale

Runes, skulls, and swastikas combined with classic German symbols such as eagles and oak leaves gave the Nazi elite troops an easily recognisable identity.



Fashion house Hugo Boss delivered the black uniforms, which from 1932 became the SS hallmark.

1 **A private** had SS in runes on his steel helmet and collar.

2 **Reichsführer** was the highest rank within the SS. Heinrich Himmler was SS-Reichsführer.

3 **SA members** were also known as the "brownshirts".

4 **Servants** in Hitler's private home were SS members too.

5 **The elite soldiers** of Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler were Hitler's personal bodyguards.

6 **SS officers** could wear a white summer mess jacket.

7 **The adjutant** dressed as an officer, but carried the special SS dagger in his belt.

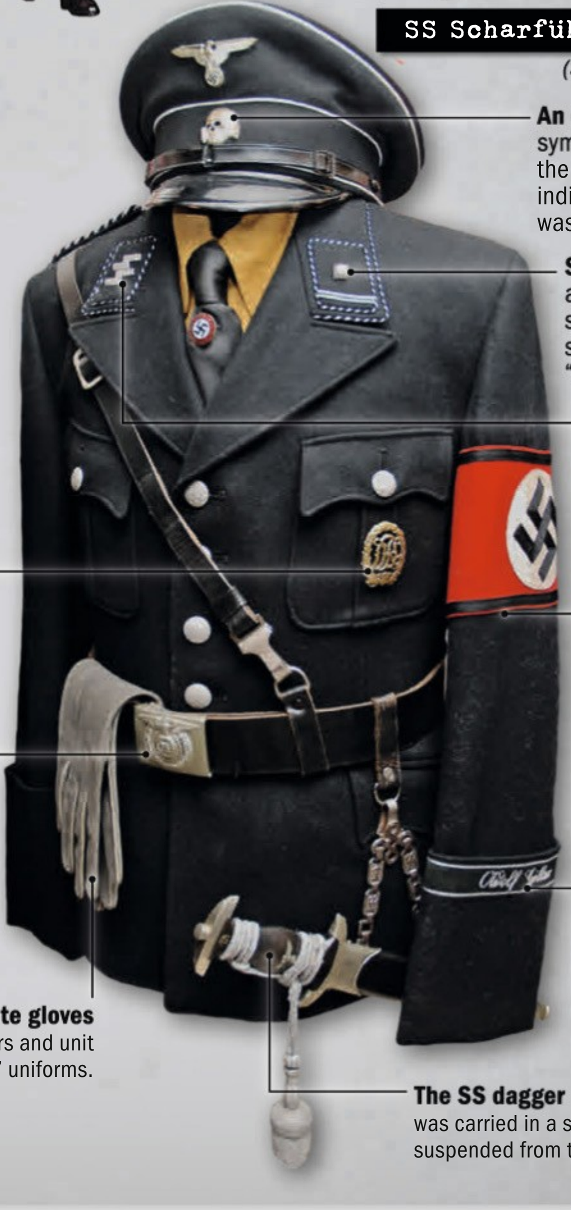
8 **Intelligence officers** wore a cap and a long grey-green coat with the SD insignia for Sicherheitsdienst on the sleeve.

9 **SS officer** in black with skull and German eagle on his cap and sabre in his belt.

FACTS

HIMMLER'S POWERBASES

- SS: the organisation became independent in 1934 and grew rapidly under Himmler's leadership. The military part (Waffen-SS) finally had over 38 divisions. Other SS units worked in KZ camps and committed genocide.
- RRSHA: the acronym stands for *Reichsicherheitshauptamt* (Reich Main Security Office). Through the RSHA, Himmler had control of the security police (SiPo), the intelligence service SD, the criminal police and the secret state police, the Gestapo.
- The police operated under Minister of the Interior Himmler.



SS Scharführer

(Sergeant)

An eagle and skull symbolised the SS, the leather strap indicated the man was not an officer.

Silver ribbon and a single pip showed that the soldier's rank was "Scharführer".

The two runes on the right collar were the symbol of victory and from the 1933 SS logo.

Badge on the pocket indicated that the soldier was physically fit – he'd received a gold sports award.

The armband was standard issue for all members of the Nazi party.

The belt buckle carried the German eagle over a swastika surrounded by the SS motto *"Meine Ehre heißt Treue"* (My Honour is Loyalty).

Adolf Hitler's name on the cuff tape indicated the soldier belonged to 1st SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler.

White gloves were a part of officers and unit commanders' uniforms.

The SS dagger was carried in a scabbard, suspended from the belt by a chain.

Deutschland and was tasked with breaking through the Polish defence in East Prussia. The invasion of Poland became a textbook example of German blitzkrieg tactics. The German strike force quickly and efficiently defeated any Polish resistance – the SS divisions, however, fought with complete disregard for any danger and often suffered heavy losses.

At this time, the Waffen-SS consisted of only three divisions and was – compared to the 136 divisions within the Wehrmacht – still a small force. During preparations for Operation Barbarossa (the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941), the Wehrmacht grew significantly while the Waffen-SS received only three percent of total recruits. Following the positive results during the operation in Poland, Hitler began to allow a gradual expansion of the SS – even though he feared triggering the displeasure of the Wehrmacht.

By March 1940, the Waffen-SS consisted of four divisions: the LSSAH (successor to Hitler's original bodyguard, led by Sepp Dietrich), the newly formed SS Verfügungs Division, the SS Division "Totenkopf" and the SS Polizei Panzergrenadier Division. It was these two divisions in particular that helped the SS gain its overwhelming reputation for brutality.

The Iron Cross is the highest military award in Germany, in 1939 it had a swastika in the middle.

SS FREES ITSELF

The Wehrmacht was sceptical towards the Waffen-SS. And its suspicion that the SS was simply a bunch of unruly thugs was quickly confirmed. SS troops often fought with a fierce fanaticism, and the belief in their own superiority made them completely indifferent to the lives of other people. The ideological indoctrination back at barracks had worked.

During the invasion of Poland, and later in Holland and Belgium, there were a number of obscenities performed, particularly on Jews. Although the SS was formally subordinate to the Wehrmacht, Himmler insisted that he be the only person to reprimand his SS soldiers. And the sentences were predictable – the accused mostly escaped or received only mild or insignificant punishments.

In September 1939, a Waffen-SS soldier forced a group of 50 Polish Jews into a synagogue, where he shot them. The soldier was court-martialed, but was acquitted because he – as the judge put it – had acted "in a state of irritation as a result of the many atrocities committed by Poles against ethnic Germans".

In addition he said, "As an SS man he was also particularly sensitive to the sight of Jews and the hostile attitude of Jewry to Germans; and thus acted quite unpremeditatedly in a spirit of youthful enthusiasm."

The Waffen-SS's often deadly zeal was not confined to Jews. On 26th May, 1940, a small group of soldiers from the British Royal Norfolk Regiment were entrenched in the village of Le Paradis in northern France. The British prevented SS Division "Totenkopf" from moving over the River Lawe, and 17 Totenkopf soldiers were killed, with 52 wounded.

The fact that a group of just 100 British soldiers could slow down an entire SS division was unbearable for SS-Obersturmführer Fritz Knöchlein. When the SS finally defeated the British, he gave orders to execute the

After weeks of training and exercise, the big day finally came when the recruits got their hands on a real weapon.

“The Wehrmacht [considered] that the SS was simply a bunch of unruly thugs”

The ring belonged to a Norwegian officer in SS Division Wiking.

prisoners. It is said that several officers in the Knöchlein's unit protested and afterwards some deserted Totenkopf. But Himmler supported Knöchlein and even awarded him the Iron Cross for bravery in battle, while the British never forgot his crimes. They traced him after the war and he was hanged in 1949. However, SS abuses in the west were only a snippet of the systematic crimes that the SS later committed on the Eastern Front.

KZ CAMPS HARDENED SOLDIERS

Among the SS divisions, Totenkopf specifically excelled in animalistic behaviour. Totenkopf's commander was the man who had executed SA leader Ernst Röhm: Theodor Eicke. As concentration camps inspector, he'd begun to build an entire empire of concentration camps where the guards had free rein to exercise their brutality while compassion for prisoners was considered a weakness. At the same time, he demanded that his men reject any belief other than total loyalty to the SS Division "Totenkopf". Eicke described the enemy, in the words of historian Rupert Butler, as "a Jewish-Bolshevik subhuman, intent on annihilating the Reich unless he was prevented. Such prevention was to be achieved without mercy or pity".

Totenkopf soldiers moved back and forth between the front and the concentration camps. In the camps, the soldiers could treat the inmates as they wanted – and many of them also acquired small fortunes, as an SS officer who served in the Belzec camp in eastern Poland, where 600,000 lost their lives, revealed:

"Even in death you could tell the families, all holding hands. It was difficult to separate them while emptying the room for the next batch. The bodies were tossed out, blue, wet with sweat and urine, the legs smeared with excrement and menstrual blood. Two dozen workers were busy checking mouths which they opened with iron hooks... Dentists knocked out gold teeth, bridges and crowns with hammers".

If the Totenkopf soldiers weren't brutal at the front, they were in the camps. Characteristically, most of the Germans' atrocities performed on the civilian population were committed by this SS division.

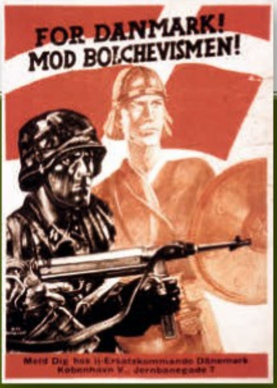
DEATH SQUADS RAN AMOK IN KILLING SPREE

Yet the Totenkopf soldiers were not the worst. In the occupied territories behind the Eastern Front was another menacing SS group, the Einsatzgruppen.

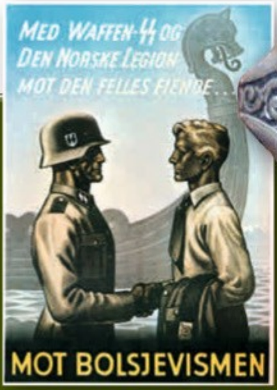
These death squads operated in the occupied territories wearing regular Waffen-SS uniforms, but here all similarity to other soldiers on the front ended. The groups had the status of security police and recruited their members from among others, the Gestapo secret police. The groups' task was to clear the occupied territory of undesirables in the wake of the advancing German army.

During the invasion of the Soviet Union, an Einsatzgruppe was attached to each SS unit. Enraged with an extreme hatred of Jews and other 'subhuman' races, the groups went on frenzied killing sprees that cost thousands of innocent Eastern Europeans their lives. Often the groups were dispatched with lists of Jews, intellectuals and other 'enemies' of the state.

The killings began as soon as the groups set foot on occupied land, and their commanders competed to see how effectively they could kill. The SS commander in Riga,


FOR DANMARK!
MOD BOLCHEVISMEN!
Meld Dig hos SS-Ersatzkommando Danmark
København V., Jernbanegade 7

Danes in their thousands volunteered to join the Waffen-SS.



Around 6,000 Norwegians fought in SS Division Wiking, formed in 1941.

Every other SS soldier was a foreigner

Fighting on the Eastern Front took a toll on the Waffen-SS. So Himmler recruited thousands of soldiers from other occupied countries.

Immediately after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union on 22nd June, 1941, the Danish government expressed its support for his struggle against communism:

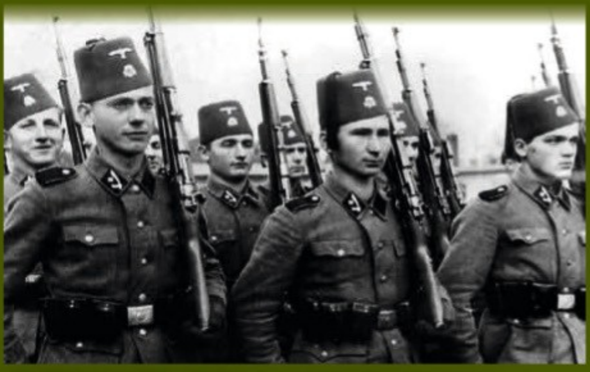
"Germany has turned her weapons eastward, and is fighting a Power which has for years threatened Scandinavian welfare and development".

The government allowed Danish soldiers to join the newly established *Frikorps Danmark* (Free Corps Denmark) – a Danish corps under the Waffen-SS.

Up to 9,000 signed up – many of them soldiers from the Danish army who were frustrated by the defeat in 1940. Others agreed with the fight against communism or wanted to seek adventure.

In total, more than 15 nationalities fought in the SS. Himmler was particularly interested in recruiting from the Germanic and Nordic countries, such as Denmark, Norway (6,000), Holland (60,000), Belgium (43,000), Sweden (around 180) and Finland (1,200).

As the war progressed, there was a growing need for fresh soldiers, and so recruitment became less picky. Among others, 17,000 Muslims from Bosnia were admitted. At the end of the war it's thought that every other soldier in the SS was non-German.



SS Division "Handschar" comprised up to 17,000 Bosnian Muslims.

Friedrich Jeckeln, boasted that he had invented the “sardine packing method”, where victims were lined up at the edge of a long grave so that they fell in a straight line when they were shot. Then the next row would stand up on the edge of the grave. According to Jeckeln, the method saved both unnecessary digging and space.

The Einsatzgruppen also accepted men from other SS divisions whose soldiers had broken the rules. Georg Keppler, commander of the SS Division Das Reich, noted that even small misdemeanours could result in transfer to an Einsatzgruppe: “They are late or they fall asleep on sentry duty. They are court-martialed but are told that they can escape punishment by volunteering for special commandos”.

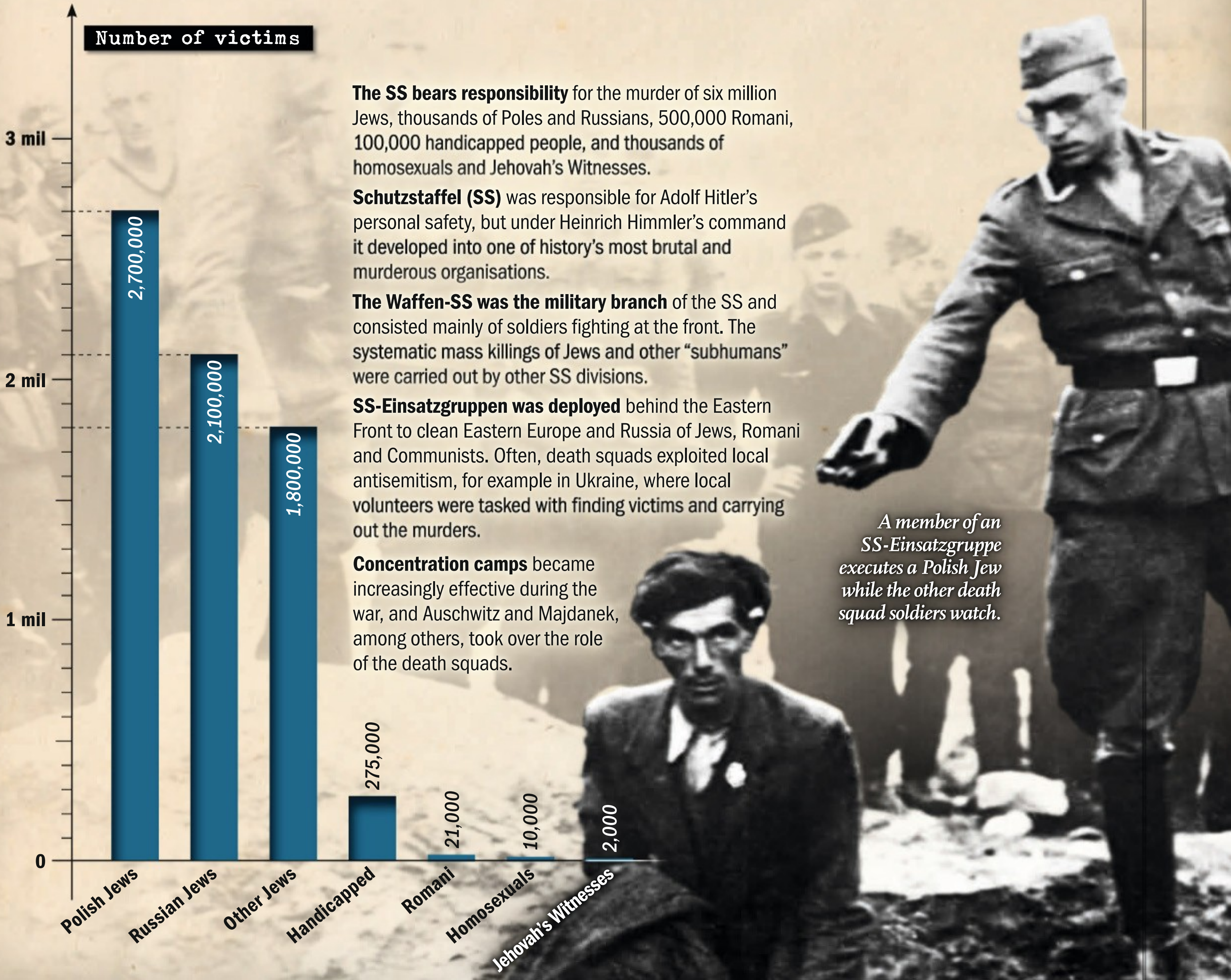
It was often too late when the soldiers discovered what joining the “special commandos” entailed. And if they disobeyed the order, they risked being shot.

“By such methods, decent young men are frequently turned into criminals,” complained Keppler. SS statistics revealed that over a few years the murderous death squads killed 633,330 Jews in the Soviet Union alone.

PERSPECTIVE

Atrocities without borders

The SS led the way with the mass murder of Jews, Romani and other non-Aryan races. Guards from the KZ camps became death squads, the so-called “Einsatzgruppen”, and sent to the Eastern Front to remove all undesirables.



The SS bears responsibility for the murder of six million Jews, thousands of Poles and Russians, 500,000 Romani, 100,000 handicapped people, and thousands of homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses.

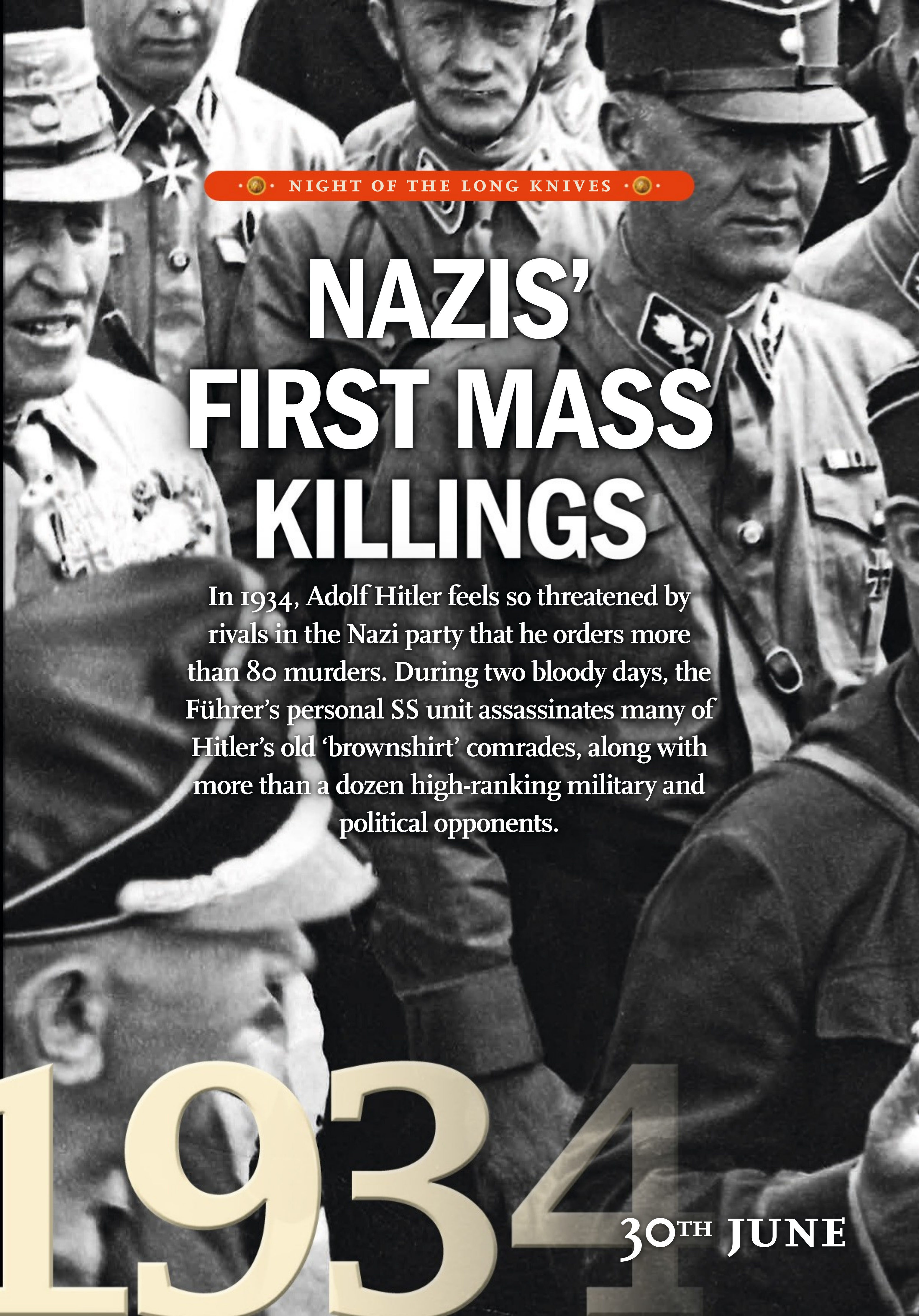
Schutzstaffel (SS) was responsible for Adolf Hitler's personal safety, but under Heinrich Himmler's command it developed into one of history's most brutal and murderous organisations.

The Waffen-SS was the military branch of the SS and consisted mainly of soldiers fighting at the front. The systematic mass killings of Jews and other “subhumans” were carried out by other SS divisions.

SS-Einsatzgruppen was deployed behind the Eastern Front to clean Eastern Europe and Russia of Jews, Romani and Communists. Often, death squads exploited local antisemitism, for example in Ukraine, where local volunteers were tasked with finding victims and carrying out the murders.

Concentration camps became increasingly effective during the war, and Auschwitz and Majdanek, among others, took over the role of the death squads.

A member of an SS-Einsatzgruppe executes a Polish Jew while the other death squad soldiers watch.



NAZIS' FIRST MASS KILLINGS

In 1934, Adolf Hitler feels so threatened by rivals in the Nazi party that he orders more than 80 murders. During two bloody days, the Führer's personal SS unit assassinates many of Hitler's old 'brownshirt' comrades, along with more than a dozen high-ranking military and political opponents.

1934

30TH JUNE

Ernst Röhm and Adolf Hitler were old comrades. Röhm had no fear of the Nazi leader and was the only person who addressed him as "you" rather than "mein Führer".

Germany, 1934

THE STAGE IS SET

GERMANY
Berlin
Munich

Adolf Hitler has been Chancellor for almost 18 months, but he doesn't yet have absolute power. A few political and military leaders still stand in his way. Most dangerous of all, however, is the opposition within his own party. The head of the SA Corps, Ernst Röhm, has openly challenged him. Hitler must act...

The purging of Hitler's opponents in the Nazi party, the armed forces and the Reichstag is reconstructed here in a drama-documentary account of the events. Day-by-day, hour-by-hour, this text follows Hitler and his supporters from the moment that the Führer learns that the head of the SA Corps, Ernst Röhm, is a danger to him until more than 80 men – including long-standing friends and comrades – lie dead, executed by the SS on the Führer's orders.

Berchtesgaden, March 1934

SA Obergruppenführer Viktor Lutze has bad news for Hitler.

The air is crisp and clear in the Bavarian Alps. It still carries a touch of winter's cold, but the heat from the sun hints that spring is on its way. On the terrace at Berghof, Adolf Hitler's private residence, the Reich chancellor sits next to a young SA officer, Viktor Lutze, both of them admiring the view of the snow-capped peaks.

The picturesque scene is forgotten, however, as Lutze declares that Ernst Röhm is out of control. Röhm, the leader of the Nazi paramilitary corps known as the SA or Sturmabteilung believes Hitler has been lax in enforcing the founding principles of national socialism. He is calling for revolution.

Lutze, swallows, then adds that he has recently heard Röhm call Hitler a "ridiculous corporal" before he repeated the SA leader's most damning words: "Hitler is a traitor and needs a long vacation".

Hitler stares into space. His old friend Röhm stands in his way. While Röhm screams for revolution, the leaders of large industry refuse to cooperate with the Nazis. And the man in the street is tired of the SA's bully boy tactics. Hindenburg, the aging president, is dying. If Hitler hopes to take over his post after he's gone – giving himself unlimited power – he must get rid of Röhm. It won't be easy. Röhm is more than just a dangerous rival. He is also an old friend and comrade. And, of course, his four million 'brownshirts' could still prove useful.

"We'll just let this ripen," the Führer says thoughtfully.

Germany, 30th June, 1934 at 02.00

Hitler flies to Munich, where the SA is allegedly rioting.

It's summer and the night sky is clear. Far below the plane, cities glow yellow and rivers glint like silver bands in the moon's cold light. From time to time, barely audible above the engine's noise, the radio scratches with a weather report or the pilot's quiet voice as he identifies the cities they're flying over. Potsdam, Leipzig, Regensburg. As is his custom, Hitler is in the co-pilot's seat. He is wearing a helmet and the collar of his

NATIONAL-SOZIALISTISCHE D.A.P.

leather coat is turned up around his ears. Silent, he stares thoughtfully into the night. He has spent the last 24 hours considering his next move. Now a new day is dawning: decision day.

In Munich, the SA members – once his most faithful and reliable followers, his stormtroopers – have spent the previous evening drunkenly rioting. His closest advisers tell him a coup is underway. Röhm has betrayed him. In Berlin, the old guard are scheming to bring him down – the nobles, the rich, the generals – all would like to see him fall from power. If he wants to keep his grip on Germany – *his* Germany – he must strike now.

Brownshirts was the name given to SA members. It comes from the unit's brown shirts, which the group adopted after Hitler found a consignment of cheap, brown uniforms.

KAUFERING, NEAR MUNICH, 02.30

The Führer's personal bodyguard is ready to swing into action against the SA.

Loyal troops from Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler get to their feet. They smooth the black uniforms that they have slept in, pull on their boots on and form ranks.

Gruppenführer Sepp Dietrich briefs them on the situation. He speaks in short sentences. Obedience is required. Traitors must be eliminated, no matter who they are. The SA is a nest of sin and depravity. Leibstandarte must clean it out, defend the honour of Germany and protect the Führer.

"Heil Hitler!" The SS men answer with one voice, raising their right arms in the German salute. The faces under the heavy, black steel helmets are tight and determined as the men climb silently into the waiting trucks.

Dietrich looks at them with his hands behind his back, a small smile playing about his lips. He's looking forward to hitting the SA.

MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS, MUNICH, 05.00

The SA riots are over.

In fact, the 'riots' were nothing more than an inconsequential group of SA members chanting anti-Hitler slogans. Propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels and SS boss Heinrich Himmler exaggerate the threat, though, with talk of a coup. Hitler decides enough is enough. He has already picked up the SA's leader in Munich, Gruppenführer Edmund Schmidt.

The gruppenführer barely reaches the office on the third floor before Hitler is on him. In a seeming fury, the dictator grabs Schmidt's rank insignia and rips it from his uniform.

"Traitor! You're under arrest!" Hitler spits into Schmidt's astonished face. "You're going to be shot!"

In the background, Goebbels stifles a smile as Schmidt is led away to Stadelheim prison.

HANSELBAUER HOTEL, BAVARIA, 06.30

The SA leadership is taken unawares.

Two days earlier, on 28th June, Hitler called for a meeting with the SA leadership at 11.00 on 30th June at the Hanselbauer Hotel in Bavaria. Having passed the previous evening celebrating at the hotel, most of the SA leaders are still asleep at 06.30.

At the entrance to the small town of Bad Wiessee, Sepp Dietrich and his SS troops meet Hitler and his followers. Together, they drive the rest of the way to that Hanselbauer Hotel. In the early morning, the doors are closed and the lights off. Shutters remain fastened at the windows. SS officers order their men into position using hand gestures. Bird song is the only noise.

Hitler moves to the front door, a pistol in one hand and a whip in the other. Suddenly all hell breaks loose. SS soldiers kick in the door and the whole party storms through the building, running up the stairs and down the corridors. There are shouts and screams as locked doors are shot, then hurled open. One SA member runs half-naked down a corridor, pursued by shouting SS men.

When the door of Röhm's deputy, Edmund Heines, is kicked in, the senior SA man is found naked in bed with a young stormtrooper. Hitler and Goebbels cannot hide their contempt.

The SS men grab Heines and start pushing him violently down the corridor with the other prisoners.

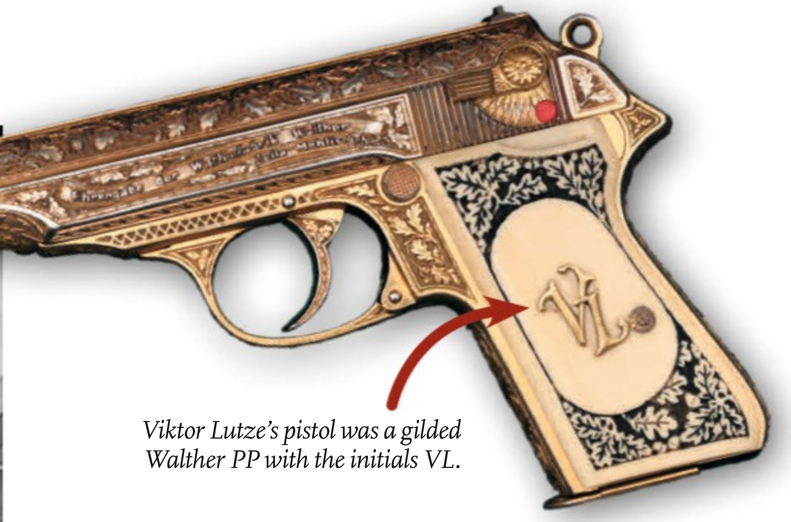
"I've done nothing! Can't you help me?" The SA officer screams as he is dragged away. Then the corridor is silent. Hitler stands

Outwardly, they appeared to share the same goals and ideals, but in reality, the rivalry between Ernst Röhm's SA and Heinrich Himmler's SS was bitter and intense.

Ernst Röhm
Heinrich Himmler

Viktor Lutze
Adolf Hitler

Hitler looked with great favour on the new SA leader Viktor Lutze, who had informed him about Ernst Röhm's treacherous comments.



Viktor Lutze's pistol was a gilded Walther PP with the initials VL.

in front of Röhm's room. He sucks in a breath, then knocks decisively on the door.

"Who's there?" Röhm asks sleepily through the thin door.

Hitler announces himself. Röhm unlocks the door and the Führer barges his way past him and into the room.

"You're already here?" Röhm asks, confused. He is the only person in the Nazi movement, who dares to say "you" to Hitler. He won't be saying it much longer. The Führer answers his question with a long tirade of accusations.

Ernst Röhm, naked to the waist, is red and puffy-faced from too much alcohol and too little sleep. The scar on his cheek stands out lividly on his discoloured face. He starts to defend himself, but quickly realises that Hitler is not listening. The Führer is already leaving to take care of other business.

12 million Reichsmarks, was the sum that Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Gestapo, claimed Ernst Röhm had been paid by the French to overthrow Hitler.

HAUPTBAHNHOF RAILWAY STATION, MUNICH, IN THE MORNING

The SS plans to intercept all of the SA late-comers at the city's railway station.

With SS soldiers swarming around the station, Hitler storms past amazed travellers to take up his position on the platform. SS men check the papers of all passengers alighting at the station. When the train from Berlin arrives, they immediately jump aboard, pushing open the doors to each compartment. The SA people they discover happily follow them in the belief that they are there to escort them to the meeting with Hitler. It is only when they are pushed into the waiting trucks and surrounded by fierce, black-clad SS soldiers that they become aware of the danger they are in. By then it is too late.

MUNICH, 10.00

Hitler takes the opportunity to settle a personal score.

At 10.00, the doorbell sounds in Gustav Ritter von Kahr's villa. Von Kahr is still wearing his dressing gown. He is 73 and lives a quiet life, away from the public eye.

However, ten years earlier, in 1923, he was one of Bavaria's most powerful men, powerful enough to put a stop to an attempted coup by Hitler – known as the Beer Hall Putsch – and have Germany's future dictator thrown into prison. Now, it is payback time. Three men take von Kahr from his home. He is never seen alive again.

THE BROWN HOUSE, MUNICH, 10.00

Joseph Goebbels launches Operation Hummingbird.

At the Brown House – the Nazi party's HQ in Munich – Joseph Goebbels lifts the handset of his telephone and asks to be put through to Hermann Göring, president of Prussia and one of the Nazi party's most influential men. When Göring picks up in Berlin, Goebbels utters one word: "*Kolibri*" (Hummingbird). Göring puts down the receiver. The time has now come to eliminate Hitler's enemies in the capital.

BABELSBERG, OUTSIDE BERLIN, 11.30

Operation Hummingbird is in full swing.

General Kurt von Schleicher sits in his room, talking on the telephone. Schleicher was Germany's chancellor before Hitler. Conservative by nature and with a military background founded on ancient Prussian virtues, he finds it difficult to accept Hitler and his vision of a New Germany.

For the moment, though, as he catches up with one of his old comrades, he is in a light mood. Through the window, he can see the spectacular sight of the yachts tacking around the lake in Babelsberg Park.

Suddenly, he apologises – because someone has rung on the doorbell. He puts the receiver on the table and goes to see who it is. At the other end of the line, his friend hears him say:

"Yes, I am General von Schleicher".

Then shots ring out and the line goes dead. Von Schleicher's wife also hears the shots and comes running in from the dining room. She sees her husband lying on the floor. Dark red blood flows from a bullet wound in his neck. She starts screaming and walking towards the killers waving her arms before her as if to wipe away the horror. Again, gunfire echoes around the apartment and Mrs von Schleicher falls to the floor next to her dead husband.

The family's governess, who witnessed the murder through an open door, stares at the killers. Most of the men begin ransacking the room, but one approaches her.

"Take it easy, miss", he says kindly, "we won't kill you". The young woman died a year later, an alleged suicide .

Gestapo HQ in Berlin

Heydrich carefully manages the operation in Berlin.

Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Gestapo, is not a man whose hands shake. Not even now, when human life, human destiny is shaped by his long, slender fingers. On numbered cards he writes a name and one or two words: "arrested", "shot" or "in process". He passes the cards on to Hermann Göring and his people, so that they can keep track of what is happening to their former friends and associates.

Heydrich stays in his office. He relays orders to his agents by phone. He works diligently, hour after hour. Cool and efficient in a freshly pressed uniform, the tall, blond Nazi god deals out life and death – with the judgments written down neatly on small, white index cards.

Leipziger Straße, Berlin, lunchtime

Göring hands out death sentences.

The orders are simple and are given to men who are used to obeying. "Find Klausener and kill him", Hermann Göring says briefly to a waiting SS captain. The officer clicks his heels together and walks away without a word.

1887-1934

NAME **ERNST RÖHM**

TITLE GERMAN OFFICER, HEAD OF STURMABTEILUNG (SA)

SA leader helped form the Nazi party

Like Hitler, Ernst Röhm was a WWI veteran. After the war, he became a volunteer in the Bavarian Freikorps, which was established in April 1919. Röhm became a member of the German Workers' Party where he met Adolf Hitler. The two became political allies and friends, and together they planned the failed Beer Hall Putsch in Munich in 1923. However, Röhm received only a suspended sentence. While Hitler served his sentence in Stadelheim Prison, Röhm built up the Sturmabteilung (SA) paramilitary corps. However, Hitler was not satisfied with Röhm's plans for the corps, and Röhm withdrew from political life for some years until he returned in 1931 as head of SA. Hitler saw the SA leader as a potential rival that needed to be eliminated.

- **During WWI, Röhm was awarded the Iron Cross First Class.**
- **Hitler feared Röhm's homosexuality could trigger a scandal.**

Hitler's stormtroopers stood in his way

Hitler was not really interested in introducing National Socialism to Germany. So, he opted for a cooperation with leading conservative elements.

The SA left its mark on 1920s and 1930s Germany with an endless series of assaults, rapes and thefts. Its members were a motley crowd, largely recruited from an impoverished, disillusioned working class. The SA's brutal behaviour helped to pave the way for Hitler's takeover of power by terrorising his political opponents. Moreover, the increase in street violence led to widespread calls for peace and order, which a duplicitous Hitler promised.

As a unit, the SA grew out of the post-war freikorps and their right-wing radical groups, who clashed violently with socialists and communists. Formed in 1920, the SA's primary role was to prevent left-wing protests at Nazi public meetings.

Ernst Röhm, a scarred veteran of World War I, quickly gained a leading role in the SA and in the Nazi party, which he helped to build.

Röhm wanted better social conditions for the working man. In his opinion, National Socialism should give equal emphasis to nationalism and socialism. But once Hitler was elected as chancellor and needed to rally support from industrialists, the military and other conservative elements in Germany, the SA stood in his way.

With the purges in 1934, Hitler had broken the SA and finished it as an independent power in German politics.

The camaraderie in the 1930's SA was forged in bloody street fights with the communists.

Waiters carry in trays with Göring's lunch. Between the napkins and beer bottles are Heydrich's cards with the names of those who have already been arrested and driven to the barracks in Lichterfelde.

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, BERLIN, 13.00

Dr Erich Klausener is a leading politician and the head of Catholic opposition to Hitler in Germany. He is also the director of Maritime Shipping at the Ministry of Transport and has long been a thorn in the side of Hermann Göring.

At 13.00 on 30th June, an SS officer walks up the stairs outside the Ministry of Transport building and politely asks to be directed to Klausener's office.

A few moments later, a senior official, a serious-looking, middle-aged man in a neatly pressed suit emerges from a toilet down the hallway. He shudders at the sight of the black-clad SS officer and hurries quickly towards his office. He picks up the phone and asks one of his colleagues to come to his office urgently.

The colleague isn't fast enough. The SS officer enters just as Klausener is replacing the receiver. The captain tells him that he is under arrest, but as the director turns to pick up his coat, the SS officer shoots him in the head. He places the pistol in the victim's hand, and phones for the SS people waiting downstairs. When Klausner's colleague arrives, black-clad officers are already standing guard in front of his door. Puzzled, the colleague looks to a nearby clerk for an explanation.

"Herr Direktor committed suicide", he says, his eyes never leaving the SS guards. "He shot himself with a gun."

LICHTERFELDE BARRACKS, OUTSIDE BERLIN, EARLY AFTERNOON

Dozens of SA leaders are arrested and executed without trial.

Prisoners are dragged from the basement and into the yard four at a time. Lined up in front of a wall, the prisoners' shirts are ripped off, and a circle drawn with charcoal around each man's left nipple.

From the basement's windows the remaining SA prisoners watch in horror as the SS execute their comrades, mercilessly and without pause. The wall is drenched with blood, but the barrack's officers know that there's no point in cleaning it right now. There are more executions to come.

THE BROWN HOUSE, MUNICH, EARLY IN THE AFTERNOON

Adolf Hitler discusses the fate of the senior SA leaders with his closest advisers.

The afternoon lunch in Munich is unbearable. The windows are wide open, but the air is still and sticky in the high-ceilinged room.

Hitler is seething. Someone offers to kill Röhm with his bare fists. Hitler ignores him. He has already appointed Viktor Lutze as Röhm's successor as the head of the SA. The Führer turns to him now and lays out his expectations.

"I want to see men as SA leaders, not ridiculous apes", he says, his quiet voice edged like a knife. "I demand of all SA leaders that, in return for my loyalty, they give me their own loyalty and support". He looks around the table at large. No-one speaks. Suddenly, Hitler is raging: “Champagne has been thrown through the windows during these orgies. They have thrown the party’s money away. I forbid the SA to drive around in expensive cars. There will be no more diplomatic dinners”.

In the following silence, someone asks what will happen to the arrested SA leaders who are now in the Stadelheim prison.

“They must be shot down like dogs” the Chancellor roars and grabs the piece of paper listing those arrested. He marks crosses against most of the names, his pen slashing across the page in his fury. He hands the list to Sepp Dietrich, the head of his SS bodyguard. “Drive to Stadelheim at once and make sure these people are executed for high treason.”

Sepp Dietrich scans the names as he prepares to leave the room. Ernst Röhm’s name is not among the damned.

Hitler guesses his thoughts. “I have spared Röhm as a thank you for his past services.”

Hitler dons a leather helmet before flying to Munich and into battle with the SA.

Stadelheim prison, late afternoon

Dietrich arrives with the Führer’s execution orders.

The metallic click of the lock brings the SA prisoner to his feet. Dietrich stands in the doorway.

“The Führer has sentenced you to death for high treason.” Dietrich says tonelessly before raising his arm in an automatic salute. “Heil Hitler!”

On cue, two SS men move forward and pull the prisoner out of his cell. A few hours ago he was a ‘brownshirt’, an invulnerable thug, menacing frightened citizens. Now, as he is led to the prison yard and stood against the wall, he is the frightened one. The firing squad is already there.

“By order of the Führer! Make ready! Aim! Fire!”

The sound of bullets echo around the yard. The SA man falls, lifeless as a rag doll. Dietrich goes to collect the next on the list, a senior SA officer.

“Comrade Sepp. This is madness!” the man cries as his cell is opened. “We are innocent.”

“The Führer has sentenced you to death for high treason. Heil Hitler!” Dietrich replies mechanically.

As the man is led away, Dietrich’s mask slips momentarily. He feels sick. He arranges for the Führer’s orders to be carried out, then leaves the prison as quickly as he can.

In Stadelheim’s courtyard, the screams are cut by gunfire once again. The warm summer evening is coming to an end. Twilight is here.

Hotel Adlon, Berlin, late afternoon

As the purge continues, Berlin’s elite meet for afternoon tea.

At Berlin’s most prestigious hotel, the Adlon, it’s business as usual. Society figures come and go, while neat, respectful serving staff wait to fulfil their orders. As ever, high-ranking officials, diplomats and military officers meet to take afternoon refreshment.

When General Ferdinand von Bredow appears, it causes genuine surprise – he is, after all, one of General von Schleicher’s closest friends.

“I have no idea why the pigs have not killed me yet,” he says in response to the questioning eyes.

Several well-wishers come over and press his hand – which requires courage, for everyone knows that the Gestapo have paid informants among the staff. A diplomat offers to take von Bredow to his home where he will be safe. The general, however, politely declines.

“I left home very early this morning. I would like to go back now that I have had the pleasure of being with my friends once again”, he says.

Von Bredow leaves a substantial tip for the waiter, says goodbye and disappears into the crowds on Unter den Linden boulevard. A few hours later, he lies dead at home in a pool of drying blood.

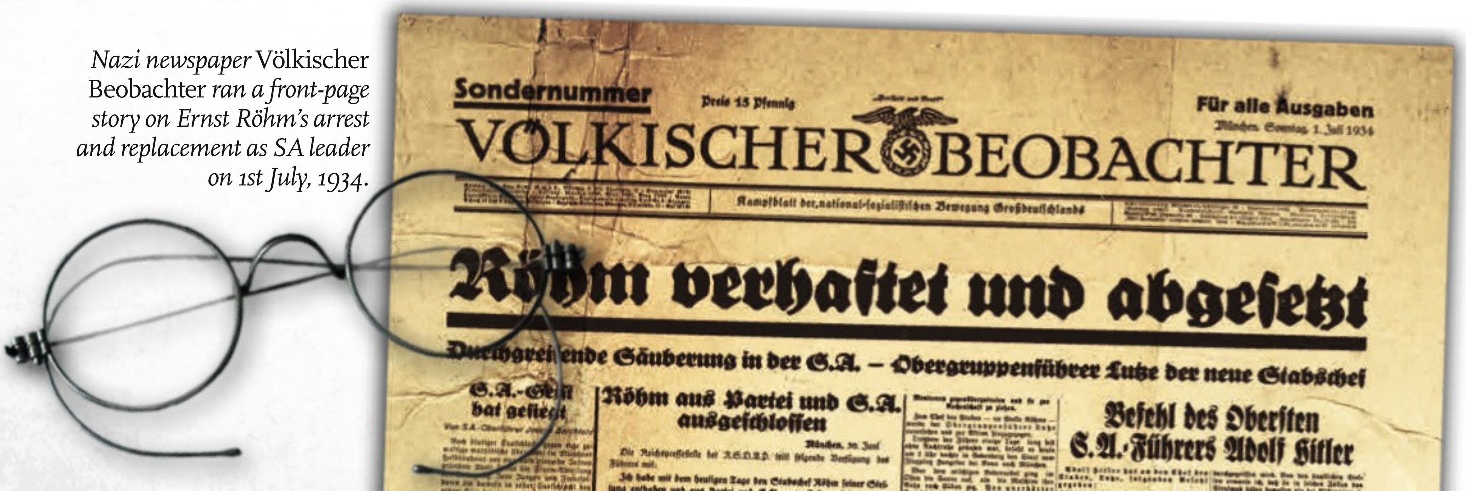
The Brown House, Munich, early evening

Some of the SA rank and file are being detained at Nazi HQ after their party at the hotel the previous night.

Tired, sweaty and hungover, the leaderless SA members nervously await their fate. When Hitler enters the room, they begin cheering jubilantly. The Führer’s fixed stare silences them once more.

“Your leaders have failed your trust”, Hitler tells the quiet room. “You fought for the cause, while your officers drank the night away, lived in luxury, dined at expensive restaurants.” The SA men listen, absorbing the

Nazi newspaper Völkischer Beobachter *ran a front-page story on Ernst Röhm’s arrest and replacement as SA leader on 1st July, 1934.*



Sondernummer

Preis 15 Pfennig

Für alle Ausgaben

München, Sonntag, 1. Juli 1934

VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER

Kampfblatt der national-ſozialiſtiſchen Bewegung Großdeutſchlands

Röhm verhaftet und abgeſetzt

Durchgreifende Säuberung in der S.A. – Obergruppenführer Lutze der neue Stabschef

S.A.-Geiſt hat geſiegt

Röhm aus Partei und S.A. ausgeſchloſſen

München, 30. Juni

Die Reichspreſſeſtelle der N.S.D.A.P. teilt folgende Verfügung des Führers mit:

Befehl des Oberſten S.A.-Führers Adolf Hitler

FACTS

NIGHT OF THE LONG KNIVES

- "Night of the Long Knives" as a German expression pre-dates the 1934 purge. It referred to a time of vengeance over one's enemies.
- In Germany, the bloody events of 1934 are known as either the "Röhm-Putsch" (the Röhm coup) or also known as "Operation Kolibri" (Operation Hummingbird).

Dozens of SA leaders were shot in the courtyard of the Lichterfelde barracks, 30 kilometres outside Berlin.

Trusted SS soldiers were awarded a blue-ribbon medal.

meaning of the Führer's words. Apparently, he has not lost confidence in them; he's only lost confidence in their leaders.

Hitler ushers Lutze forward, introducing him as the new SA leader. Then, taking a moment to look into the eyes of the assembled men, the Führer asks if they are ready to follow him or if they will remain loyal to the leaders who abused their trust and ideals.

With an energy borne of equal parts fear and relief, the SA members cry "Heil Hitler!" before breaking into the Horst Wessel song:

Raise high the flag! Close tight the ranks!
SA, march on, with firm and steadfast tread.
Our comrades, killed in Red Front confrontations
March in their spirits side by side with us!

Hitler watches the men. In a little while, he will let Lutze send them home. He knows now that they will obey.

Munich, 20.00

As Hitler flies back to Berlin, Joseph Goebbels takes to the radio to broadcast his eye-witness account of the events happening at the hotel in Bad Wiessee.

Settling himself before the microphone, Hitler's propaganda minister begins reading the script he has prepared. He carefully explains to listeners how the Führer flew personally to Munich to arrest those members of the SA whose lust for personal power had threatened to destabilise Germany's government. He refrains from describing in detail "the revolting, almost stomach-churning scenes" that he witnessed at the hotel and instead focuses on the crimes of those arrested: conspiring with a foreign power, "debauched living", "ostentation and gluttony" and engaging in "disgraceful and disgusting sexual abnormality". Goebbels pauses for a moment: he wants the next part to be very clear. "What the Führer does, he does completely. Anyone who rebels against the Führer should be in no doubt that he is playing a risky game with his own life".

At home, in their upholstered armchairs, Germany's citizens listen in amazement. They had never realised that the nation was under threat from such depraved individuals, but now, thanks to the Führer's decisive action they can sleep easily in their beds.

> **Like the SS,** the SA had military units during the war, including armoured corps and a naval service used as a rescue service and took part in the defence of German ports.

Reich Chancellery, Berlin, 1st July at 13.00

Göring has persuaded Hitler to execute the head of the SA, Ernst Röhm.

As always, the changing of the guard in front of the Reich Chancellery in Berlin draws a crowd. Even in July, young and old flock to watch the pomp and pageantry.

Synchronised boot heels strike the ground and the flags flutter in the light breeze. Finally, the window on the first floor is opened and Adolf Hitler appears. He waves to the crowd. He appears rested and calm, his black hair freshly oiled with its characteristic sharp parting. No one would believe that minutes earlier he gave the SS orders to kill his old comrade, Röhm.

Stadelheim prison, Munich, at 14.30

Hitler offers Röhm an honourable way out.

The heavy door to cell 474 clangs opens and SS officer Theodor Eicke enters. Röhm, who is still shirtless, follows him with his eyes.

Eicke places a copy of the Nazi newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* on the table. The front-page claims that Röhm has been replaced as head of the SA. Next to the paper, Eicke lays a pistol. "If Adolf wants to kill me, let him do the dirty work," says Röhm defiantly.

Eicke, who is commander of the concentration camp at Dachau, is uninterested in Röhm's grandstanding. He turns on his heel and leaves the cell without a word. He will give Röhm ten minutes to do the decent thing.

Reich Chancellery, 14.30

Hitler holds a tea party.

The Reich Chancellery buzzes with chatter. Different languages make up a background hum, which is punctured by the noise of clattering teacups. Hitler is wearing a white shirt and a uniform jacket with a swastika armband. He circulates stiffly, an object to be admired from afar. Charismatic as always, but today the Führer's eyes are empty. His hollow laughter and mechanical movements mark a mediocre performance by a man whose heart simply isn't it. No-one notices.

Stadelheim prison, 14.40

Time is up for Ernst Röhm. He's had his 10 minutes.

When the door to cell 474 opens, Röhm hasn't moved.

"Röhm, get ready," roars Eicke.Röhm gets to his feet. Defiant to the last, he stands erect with his chest puffed out. Eicke nods to the SS guard. Hands shaking, the soldier shoots. He fires a second time and Röhm falls to the floor.

"Mein führer, mein führer", the former SA leader whispers. The third bullet ends his life.

Reich Chancellery, a few minutes later

Hitler is informed of Röhm's death.

Once again, Hitler is waving to the crowd outside the Reich Chancellery. An SS officer steps onto the balcony and hands him a piece of paper. Hitler quickly reads the text. A few moments pass, then he disappears into his apartment, alone.

The Kroll Opera House, Berlin

Hitler speaks to the Reichstag.

The mood is tense as Hitler approaches the rostrum at the Kroll Opera House. Since the Reichstag fire the year before, parliament has been meeting here. Now, Hitler must explain the deaths of 13 members of the Reichstag who have been purged alongside the SA leaders. Hitler is flanked by armed SS men. In the auditorium, all eyes are drawn to the 13 empty seats.

Hitler begins his address, which is broadcast across the nation. The conclusion couldn't be clearer. The Führer has set himself up as judge, jury and executioner:

"Mutinies are suppressed in accordance with laws of iron that are eternally the same.

"If anyone reproaches me and asks why I did not resort to the regular courts of justice for conviction of the offenders, then all that I can say to him is this: in this hour I was responsible for the fate of the German people, and thereby I became the supreme justiciar of the German people!"

Loud applause echoes around the auditorium. Outside, a cheering crowd awaits. In homes across Germany, couples nod and agree. There is no mistake, Hitler has the nation in the palm of his hand.

Murders led to total power

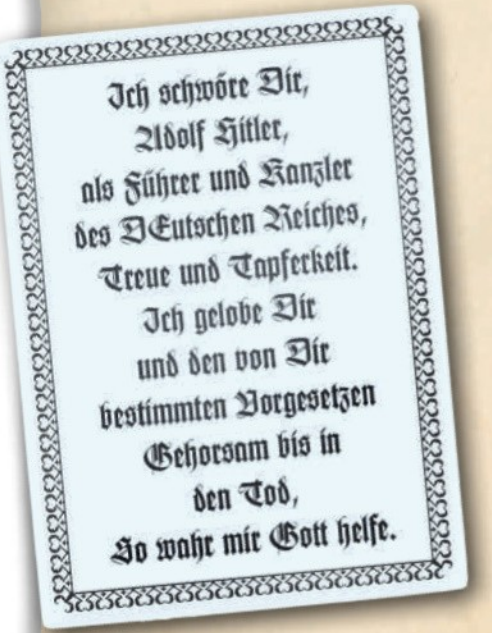
The German parliament and the judiciary accepted Hitler's purge, even though from a legal standpoint it was a blatant series of heinous criminal acts.

Unrestricted power had always been Hitler's ambition, and the purge of 1934 was the culmination of a process that began as soon as he became chancellor in January 1933. One month after his election, he used the Reichstag fire and the failed communist coup he claimed was behind it as a pretext to suspend the German constitution and ban other political parties. A year later, Hitler was ready to take another major step on the road to becoming the country's dictator.

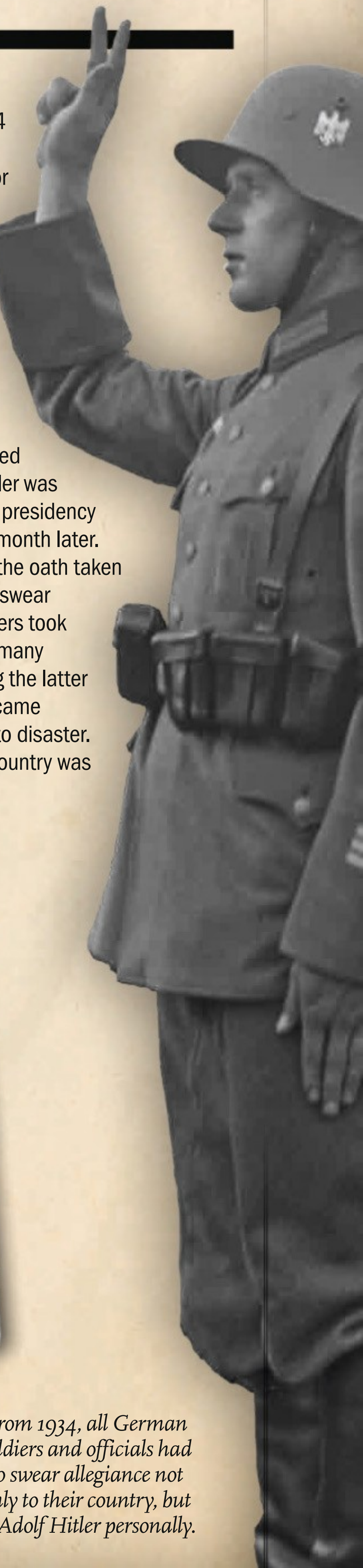
The Night of the Long Knives eliminated everyone in Hitler's way. Once gone, Hitler was unopposed when he moved to take the presidency following Paul von Hindenburg death a month later.

Hitler used his new power to change the oath taken by German soldiers, so that they would swear allegiance to him personally. Most officers took their oaths seriously – so much so that many refused to criticise his leadership during the latter stages of World War II, even when it became obvious that he would lead Germany into disaster.

After the mass killings in 1934, the country was on direct course for war and genocide.



Ich schwöre Dir,
Adolf Hitler,
als Führer und Kanzler
des DEutschen Reiches,
Treue und Tapferkeit.
Ich gelobe Dir
und den von Dir
bestimmten Vorgesetzen
Gehorsam bis in
den Tod,
So wahr mir Gott helfe.

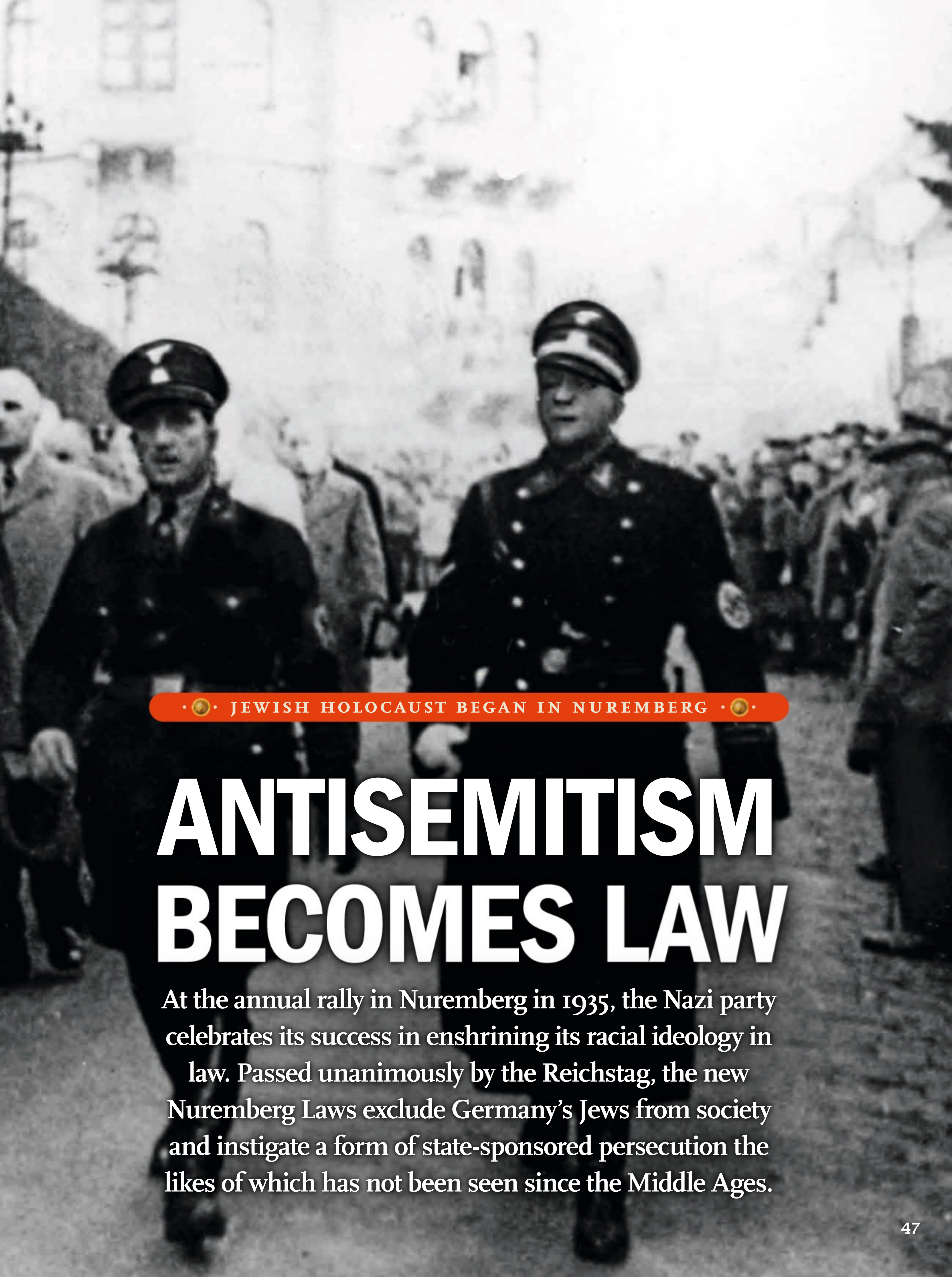


From 1934, all German soldiers and officials had to swear allegiance not only to their country, but to Adolf Hitler personally.

Germany's Jews were first excluded from German society and later stripped of their assets, liberty and, in most cases, their lives.

1935

SEPTEMBER



JEWISH HOLOCAUST BEGAN IN NUREMBERG

ANTISEMITISM BECOMES LAW

At the annual rally in Nuremberg in 1935, the Nazi party celebrates its success in enshrining its racial ideology in law. Passed unanimously by the Reichstag, the new Nuremberg Laws exclude Germany's Jews from society and instigate a form of state-sponsored persecution the likes of which has not been seen since the Middle Ages.

Nuremberg, 1935

THE STAGE IS SET

GERMANY
Nuremberg

After two years in office, Adolf Hitler has unlimited power. Now, at the Nazi party's annual rally in Nuremberg, the German dictator presents two new laws that he claims will protect Germany from the 'Jewish threat' and lay the foundations for an all-Aryan Third Reich. The Holocaust is about to begin...

On 15th September, 1935, the Nazi party's annual convention in the city of Nuremberg was drawing to a close. At 20.00, the German Reichstag assembled in the hall of the city's Cultural Association building in order to pass three bills drafted by the dictator himself. The new laws defined the characteristics, rights and limitations of German Jews – the Nazi's greatest enemy. It was the only time that the Reichstag met outside Berlin and showed the significance of the new laws, which were adopted at the same time as Germany's new Swastika flag.

"Loud complaints of provocative actions of individual members of this race are coming in from all sides," the Führer told the assembled crowd from his place at the podium. Left unchecked, he said, the outraged populace might turn on the Jews and as a result "a legislative solution to the problem" was the only alternative.

In 1933, German Jews lost the right to education and Jewish doctors had to give up their practices. With the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, all German Jews lost their citizenship.

When Hitler finished speaking, rhythmic cheers echoed around the hall: "Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler!" The newly adopted statutes – later known as the Nuremberg Laws – were designed to 'protect' Germany's Aryan people against the Jews. From that point on, a German citizen had to have Aryan or part-Aryan blood. Consequently, all German-born Jews immediately lost their rights as citizens and Nazi Germany officially launched its fight against Europe's Jews

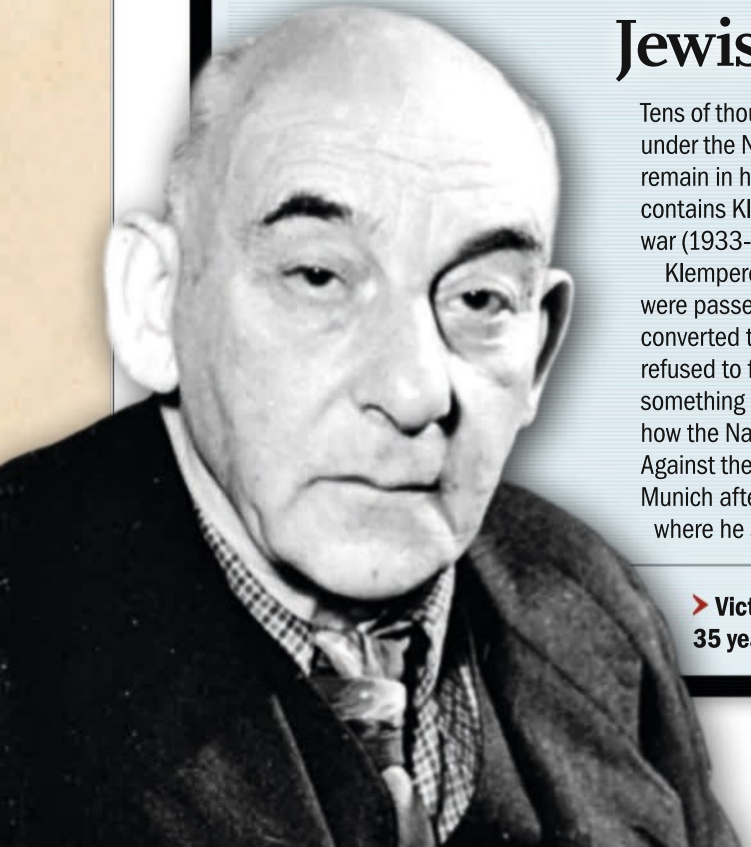
Jews were blamed for everything

When the Nuremberg Laws were adopted in 1935, Germany had about 500,000 practising Jews – less than one percent of

1881-1960

NAME **VICTOR KLEMPERER**

TITLE PROFESSOR OF LITERATURE



Jewish Professor refused to flee

Tens of thousands of German Jews either fled, committed suicide or were killed under the Nazi regime. Jewish professor Victor Klemperer became one of the few to remain in his hometown and kept a detailed diary throughout the period. The diary contains Klemperer's account of life as a Jew in Nazi Germany before and during the war (1933-45).

Klemperer, who lived in a suburb of Dresden, was 54 when the Nuremberg Laws were passed in 1935. He had fought in the German army during World War I and had converted to Christianity when he married his German wife, Eva. Klemperer therefore refused to flee – Germany was his home: "We must stay here and scrape by, even if something is offered from outside", he wrote in 1935. His diary describes in detail how the Nazis first excluded Jews from society and later tried to eradicate them. Against the odds, Klemperer survived in Dresden for most of the war, but fled to Munich after the Allies flattened the city in 1945. He later moved back to Dresden, where he spent the rest of his life.

› Victor Klemperer's diary *I Will Bear Witness* was published in 1995, 35 years after the author's death.

During the Kristallnacht in November 1938, synagogues were torched throughout Germany.

FACTS

NAZI TERMINOLOGY

- **Sonderbehandlung** = special treatment (the SS term for the murder of Jews and other enemies of the regime).
- **Verschärfte Vernehmung** = torture.
- **Evakuierung** = evacuation (deportation of unwanted citizens).
- **Umschlagsplatz** = rail collection point (rail-side assembly points where Jews and Romani were gathered before being deported to the extermination camps).
- **Nacht und Nebel** = night and fog (the phrase is synonymous with 'cloak and dagger' in English and was used as a password for secret operations, such as the murder of political prisoners).
- **Lebensraum** = living space (ethnic cleansing and subsequent colonisation of Eastern Europe).
- **Endlösung** = The Final Solution (the deliberate and systematic genocide of all Jews).

the German population. Nevertheless, the Nazis claimed that the Jews' presence threatened the very existence of the German people: As Hitler wrote in his book *Mein Kampf*, "The black-haired Jewish youth lies in wait for hours on end, satanically glaring at and spying on the unsuspicious girl whom he plans to seduce, adulterating her blood and removing her from the bosom of her own people".

According to Hitler, the Jews were secretly striving for world domination and their machinations were behind everything from Bolshevism and international capitalism to the US government. The Nazis wanted to make conditions so bad for Jews that they would leave Germany voluntarily.

As soon as the Nazis gained power in Germany in 1933, the party ordered all Jewish officials to resign; shortly afterwards, Jews were also banned from working as directors, actors or in any other positions associated with German cultural life. Some party members, however, believed that the party was too soft on Jews, and in the summer of 1935 instigated a series of violent, race-fuelled street riots.

The incidents worried Hitler: he wanted to appear as a statesman, not as the leader of a bunch of thugs – especially as Berlin was set to host the Olympic Games in 1936. The Nuremberg Laws to some extent satisfied the more extreme wing of the Nazis, and the number of violent incidents dropped after they were adopted. For the same reason, some Jews also considered the race laws as the lesser of two evils. The feeling didn't last.

JEWS EXILED FROM SOCIETY

The Nuremberg Laws defined Jewishness by the number of Jewish grandparents a person had. One or two Jewish grandparents meant that they were a *mischling* (half-blood) with fewer rights than those the Nazis referred to as 'full-blooded Germans'. However, mischlings still had some rights – they were permitted to work in the public sector, for instance. A person with three or four Jewish grandparents, on the other hand, was defined as a Jew: their rights were extremely limited and became more so under Nazi rule.

"1,000 mosquito bites are worse than a blow to the head"

"I simply am not German and Aryan, but a Jew and must be grateful if I'm allowed to stay alive", wrote Jewish Professor Victor Klemperer, who in 1935 was forced to retire from Dresden's Technical University.

Claiming that they were acting in accordance with public sympathies, the Nazis denied Jews access to education, libraries, public transport and parks.

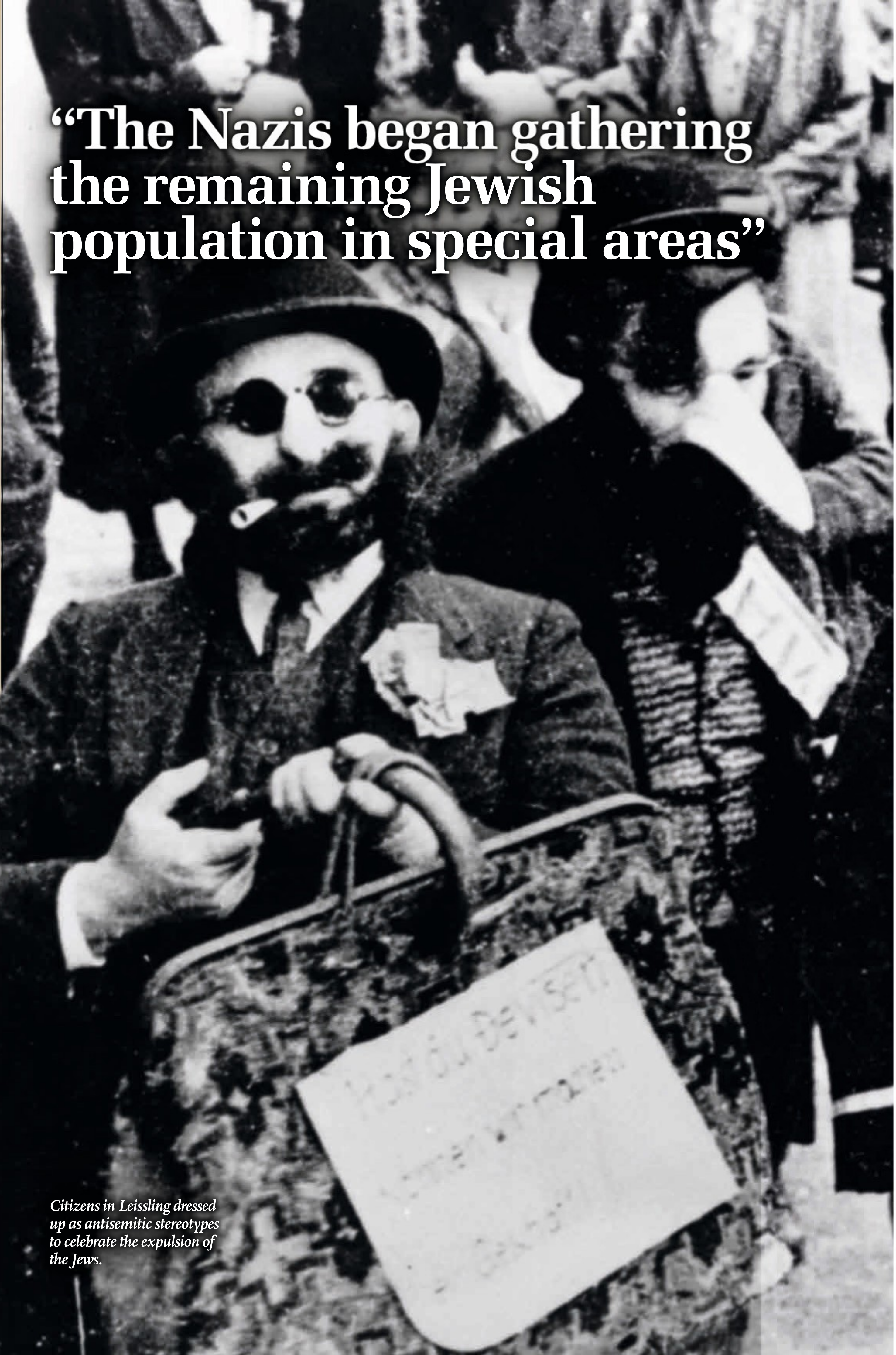
As Klemperer remarked, "It's not the big things that are important to me, but the everyday life of tyranny, which gets forgotten. 1,000 mosquito bites are worse than a blow to the head. I observe, note down the mosquito bites".

In October 1936, the former professor was informed that he could no longer use the library's reading room. Two months later, his phone line was taken away.

Meanwhile, Hitler stepped up the antisemitic rhetoric in his speeches as he warned everyone of the Jews' destructive attempts to overthrow the German state.

In September 1937, Hitler's propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, wrote in his diary that "The Jews

“The Nazis began gathering the remaining Jewish population in special areas”



Citizens in Leissling dressed up as antisemitic stereotypes to celebrate the expulsion of the Jews.

must get out of Germany, yes out of the whole of Europe" – the Führer was "firmly decided" on it. And so, slowly, but surely, the status of Jews was debased still further. Antisemitism had become the norm. As Klemperer noted: "Everywhere… I see the sign 'Jews Unwelcome!'…Hatred of Jews is being whipped up again… the Jews are the criminal people; all crimes can be traced back to the Jew".

The Star of David was worn by all Jews in Poland from 1939 and for German Jews in 1941.

Hundreds murdered in streets

In August 1938, all Jews were forced by law to add 'Israel' or 'Sara' to their name: "It would make one laugh", Klemperer wrote, "if it were not enough to make one lose one's reason".

On 9th November, 1938, Hitler's antisemitic programme led to the infamous *Kristallnacht* (Crystal Night or Night of the Broken Glass). In a single night of violent riots hundreds of Jews were murdered, 267 synagogues torched and over 7,000 Jewish businesses destroyed. Afterwards the Jews were ordered to pay for the material damage caused by the pogrom.

The main purpose of the laws, harassment and violence was to make German Jews' lives so intolerable that they preferred to leave the country. And it worked – even when the Nazis demanded all their wealth in return for exit papers.

About 70,000 Jews left Germany shortly after Hitler came to power in 1933. After that emigration slowed until the events of Kristallnacht, when tens of thousands more Jews fled.

Victor Klemperer also considered leaving and sought advice from a "decent gentleman" at the Public Information Office for Emigrants: "From his explanations it emerged that they really would [only] let us out stripped and naked and with [just] 7.5 percent of the proceeds of the house".

He abandoned his plan. But many others were willing to leave their assets behind them. In 1939, over 77,000 Jews managed to leave Germany, even though most nations were reluctant to accept the penniless Jewish migrants. 10,000 of that number were unaccompanied Jewish children who were accepted in Britain after a substantial bond had been paid to the British government.

Einstein fled to the US

In 1939, the Nazi dream of a Jew-free Germany was on its way to becoming a reality. When World War II broke out in September 1939, 282,000 of Germany's original 500,000 Jews and 117,000 of Austria's 174,000 Jews had emigrated. Among them were German physicist Albert Einstein and Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud.

But the German invasion of Poland changed the picture entirely. Suddenly, millions of Jews were living under Nazi rule. And the number increased as Germany's armies captured more and more territory. The Nazis' solution to the "Jewish Question" involved gathering the Jews from their newly acquired domains into huge ghettos, where they were used as slave labour.

German Jews weren't exempt: the Nazis soon began gathering the remaining Jewish population in special areas. In May 1940, Victor Klemperer was forced to give up his house and instead move into an apartment in a *Judenhäuser* (Jewish house) – one of many that the authorities used to house Jews. "It is still quite impossible to know whether a tolerable existence can be established here", Klemperer wrote in his diary just after the enforced move.

More and more restrictions were being placed on the Jews. In 1941, Jews were banned from receiving milk or eggs, smoking or using public phones. They also had to wear a prominent yellow Star of David on their clothes.

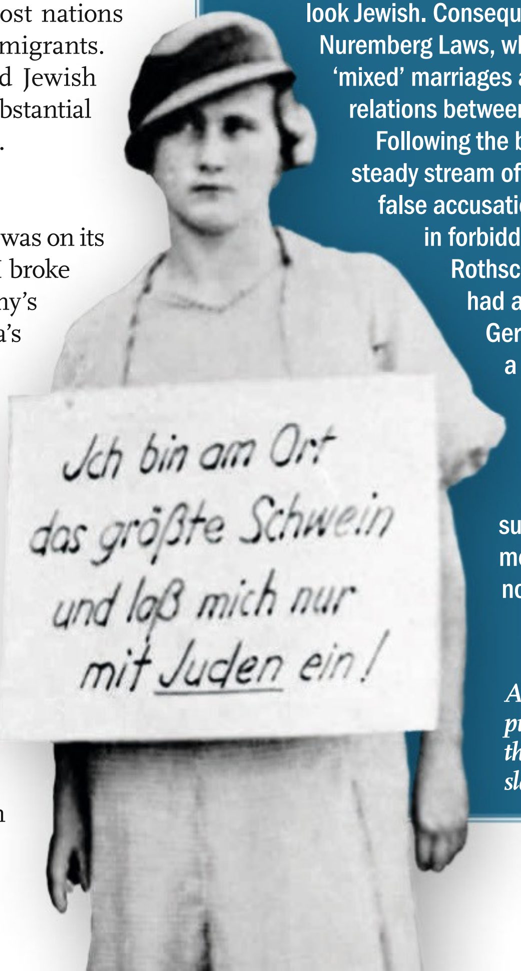
In the same year, the Nazis changed their policy, and Jews were now prevented from leaving Germany. Increasing numbers were sent to concentration camps. Then things became even worse: "Being arrested, no matter for what trifle… being arrested is now identical with

The Nazis were fearful of Jewish men

The Nazis outlawed sexual relations between Jews and Aryans due to their belief that a single Jewish sperm could destroy a woman's body.

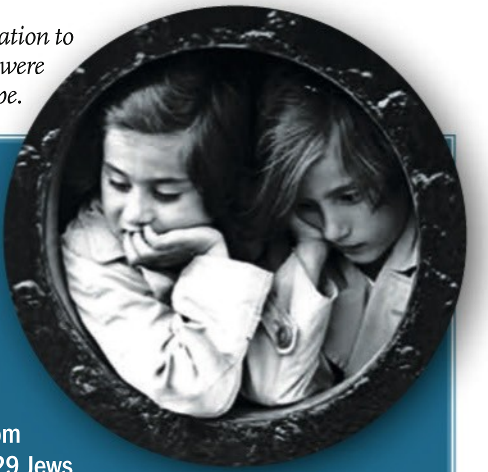
The Nazis feared that the Jews would 'taint' pure German blood. It was widely believed that a single Jewish sperm could permanently destroy a German woman's body so that any children she bore would look Jewish. Consequently, the Nazis enacted the Nuremberg Laws, which included a ban on all 'mixed' marriages and any kind of sexual relations between Germans and Jews.

Following the ban, authorities received a steady stream of anonymous and usually false accusations that Jews had engaged in forbidden sexual relations. Salomon Rothschild was accused of having had a relationship with a young German woman, she underwent a medical examination that proved she was still a virgin. Rothschild was released from prison, but lost his company. He was subsequently awarded a meagre compensation that in no way made up for his losses.



A German woman is shamed in public with a sign proclaiming that she is a "fat pig that only sleeps with Jews".

In 1939, 930 German Jews were granted documentation to emigrate to Cuba. Once they arrived, however, most were denied entry and had to return to Europe.



The Jewish refugee ship that shamed the world

Very few countries wanted to accept the tens of thousands of Jews who fled the terrors of Nazi Germany.

The main purpose of the Nazi harassment of German Jews was to make their lives so intolerable that they left the country of their own accord. However, few countries wanted to accept the refugees. Some travelled to Palestine, but that was under British control at the time and had tight quotas for the number of Jewish immigrants it could accept. The US and Western European nations also had strict rules about how many refugees they would accommodate.

In May 1939, 930 Jewish refugees boarded the passenger ship *MS St. Louis* to Cuba, but once there the authorities demanded $500 from each of them. Only 29 Jews could pay the fee. The rest remained on board and the ship sailed on to the US and Canada, but both countries refused to take the refugees.

Eventually, the ship returned to Europe, where the Jews were divided between Britain, France, Holland and Belgium. Around 250 of the refugees lost their lives when Nazi Germany subsequently captured those continental states where they had been forced to live.

The refugee ship MS St. Louis *became a symbol of the world's unwillingness to welcome fugitive Jews.*

being killed, right here and now”, Klemperer wrote. “They don't even bother with the concentration camps anymore”.

Nazis adopt the Final Solution

At the Wannsee conference in January 1942, the Nazis decided that Europe's Jews – despite their usefulness as a source of free labour – had to be exterminated. In Eastern Europe half-Jews were classed as Jews; quarter-Jews were classed as non-Jews – unless, as the conference minutes put it, he or she had an “undesirable appearance that marks him [or her] outwardly as a Jew”.

In 1943, the few remaining German Jews were deprived of their last rights and then gradually sent to KZ camps.

One by one, Klemperer's friends disappeared: “So many fall around me, but I'm still alive. Perhaps it is my destiny to survive and bear testimony”, he wrote. He, however, had difficulty believing that he would avoid extermination.

His chance came in February 1945 when the Allies bombed Dresden. Thousands of fire bombs destroyed large parts of the city, but by luck, Klemperer and his wife survived. In the final months of the war, they were on the run. They ended up in Munich, and witnessed the city's capture by US soldiers.

Of the 4,675 Jews living in Dresden before 1933 – and of the 1,265 left in the city in 1941 – only a handful survived.

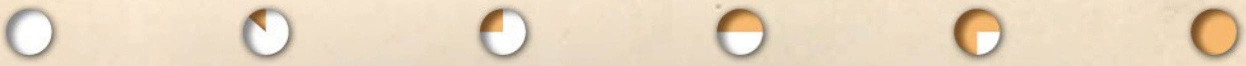
On 29th April, 1945, the man who had drafted the Nuremberg Laws committed suicide. In his political will, Hitler wrote “Above all I charge the leaders of the nation and those under them to scrupulous observance of the laws of race and to merciless opposition to the universal poisoner of all peoples, international Jewry”.

> **Jewish children** went into German schools so that teachers could use them to demonstrate the distinct physical characteristics of the Jewish race.

The menorah has been a symbol of Judaism since ancient times.

Germans were 'protected' from the taint of Jewish blood

The Nuremberg Laws categorised the German people according to the proportion of Aryan blood the individual carried. Strict rules were enforced to ensure that Jewish blood didn't 'contaminate' German – Aryan – blood. The laws became the foundation for the systematic persecution of Jews.



Full-blooded German without any Jewish or 'undesirable' blood.

German with 1/8th Jewish blood.

Quarter-blood (also called mixed race (second degree))

Half-blood (half-Jews or mixed race (first degree))

Three-quarter-blood (was considered full-blooded)

Full-blooded Jew with only Jewish blood in their veins.

Full-blooded German

Four German grandparents meant that a person was a thoroughbred German. Marriage or sexual intercourse with Jews or Half-Jews were prohibited. However, marriage between Full-blooded German and a Quarter-blood was allowed as their children would only be 1/8 Jewish bloods. Full-blooded Germans could be citizens of the Third Reich.

Quarter-blood

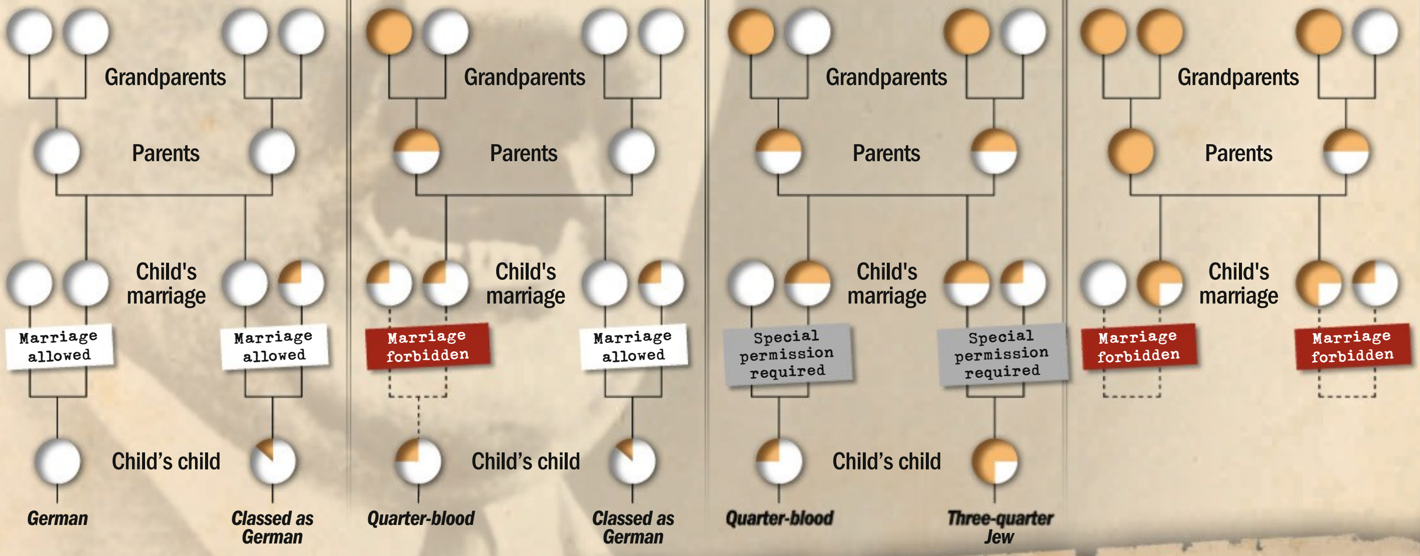
A Quarter-blood had only one full-blooded Jew as a grandparent and one half-Jew as a parent. Quarter-bloods had to marry Germans, so that their children would be 1/8th Jewish bloods, who counted as Germans. Marriage with other quarter-bloods was forbidden, for their children, according to the Nazi racial theory, would also be considered quarter-bloods and hence their Jewish blood would not have been diluted. Quarter Jews could be citizens of the Third Reich.

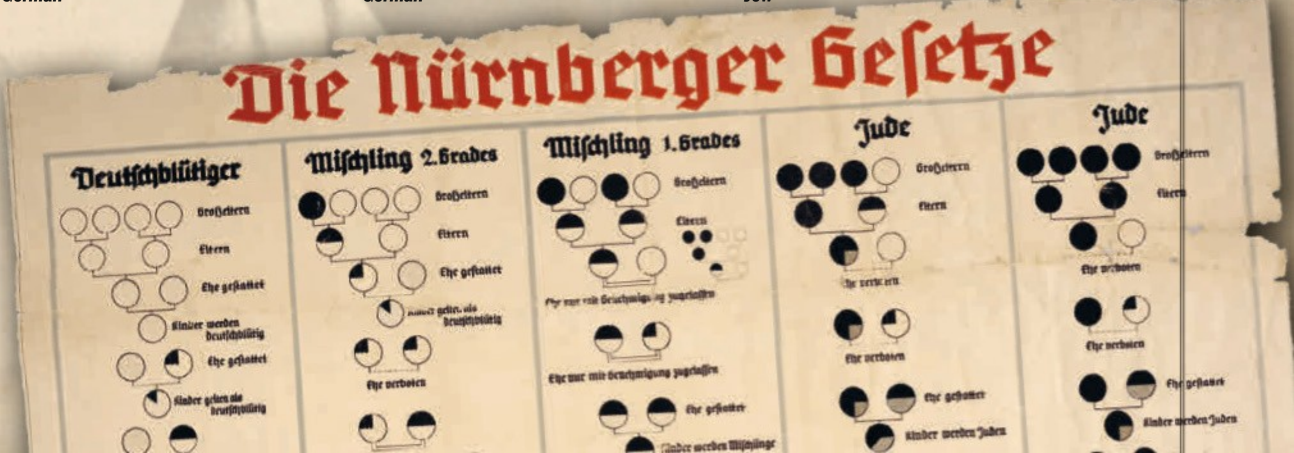
Half-Jews

A half-Jew – also known as 'mixed race (first degree)' – was a person with two full-blooded Jews as grandparents. Half-Jews had to seek special permission to marry, and in most cases, were only allowed to marry Jews or other half- or three-quarter-bloods.

Full-blooded Jew

Those people with three or four full-blooded Jews as grandparents were considered full-blooded Jews, regardless of religious beliefs. The full-blooded Jews could not marry or have sexual relations with any non-Jews. And vice versa. Jews could not be citizens of the Third Reich. After 1935, Jews without national citizenship could no longer work in the public sector, nor did they have electoral or voting rights.

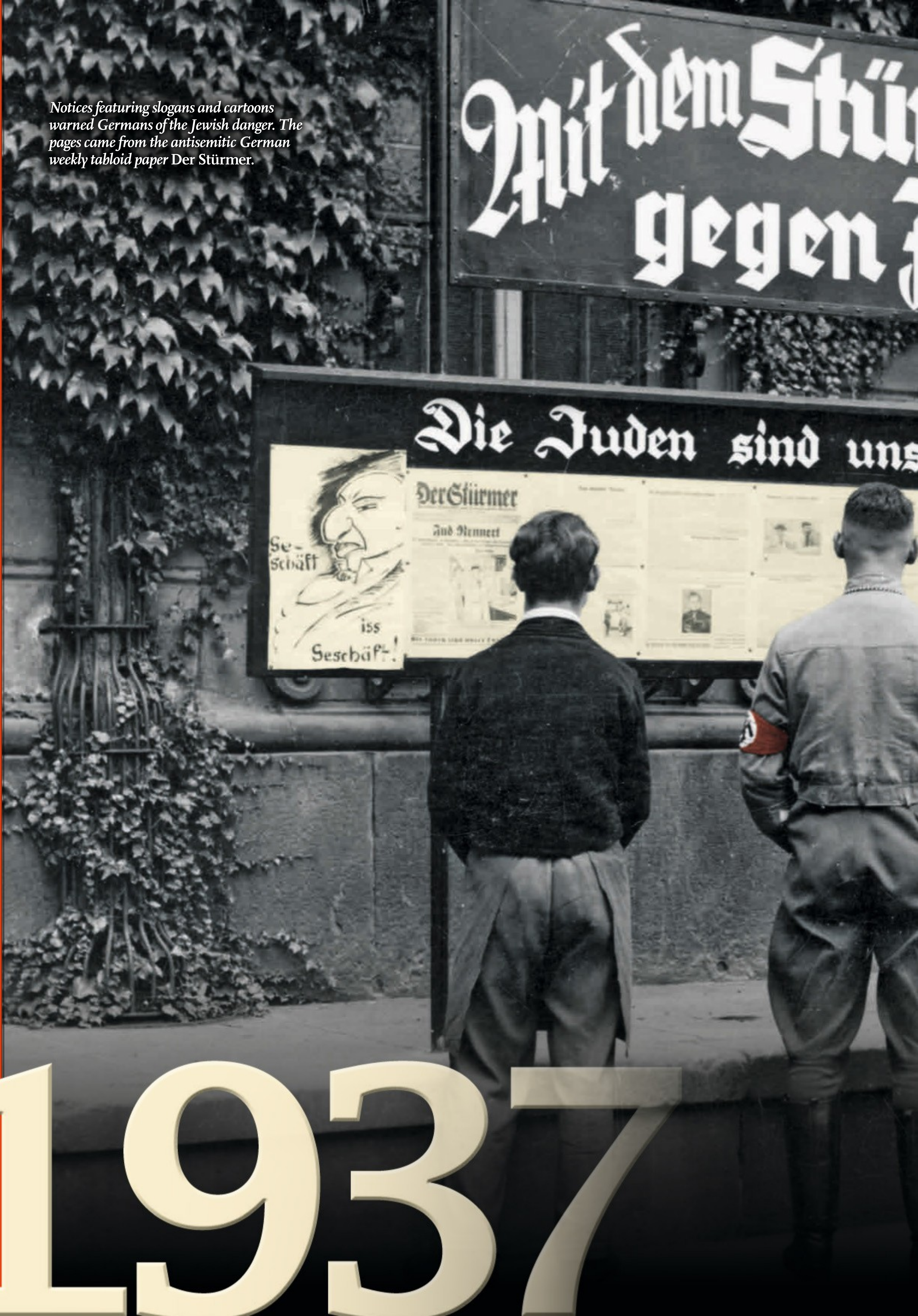

Grandparents
Parents
Child's marriage
Marriage allowed
Marriage allowed
Child's child
German
Classed as German
Grandparents
Parents
Child's marriage
Marriage forbidden
Marriage allowed
Child's child
Quarter-blood
Classed as German
Grandparents
Parents
Child's marriage
Special permission required
Special permission required
Child's child
Quarter-blood
Three-quarter Jew
Grandparents
Parents
Child's marriage
Marriage forbidden
Marriage forbidden


Die Nürnberger Geſetze
Deutſchblütiger
Großeltern
Eltern
Ehe geſtattet
Kinder werden deutſchblütig
Ehe geſtattet
Kinder gelten als deutſchblütig
Miſchling 2. Grades
Großeltern
Eltern
Ehe geſtattet
Kinder gelten als deutſchblütig
Ehe verboten
Miſchling 1. Grades
Großeltern
Eltern
Ehe nur mit Genehmigung zugelaſſen
Ehe nur mit Genehmigung zugelaſſen
Ehe geſtattet
Kinder werden Miſchlinge
Jude
Großeltern
Eltern
Ehe verboten
Ehe verboten
Ehe geſtattet
Kinder werden Juden
Jude
Großeltern
Eltern
Ehe verboten
Ehe verboten
Ehe geſtattet
Kinder werden Juden

The Nuremberg Laws stripped Jews of their German citizenship and banned German Jewish marriages.

1937

Notices featuring slogans and cartoons warned Germans of the Jewish danger. The pages came from the antisemitic German weekly tabloid paper Der Stürmer.

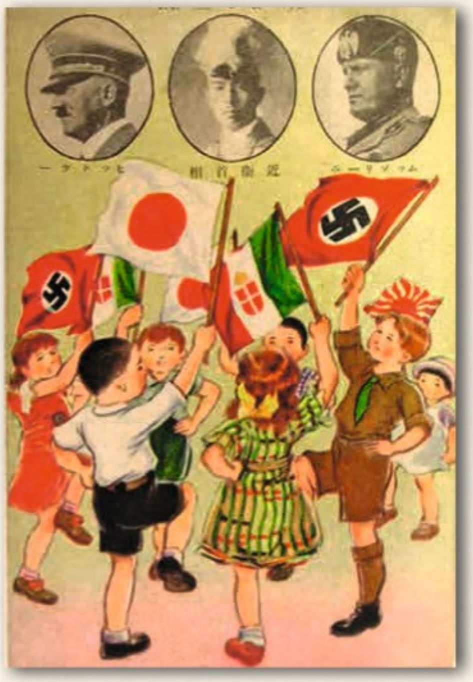

Mit dem Stür
gegen J
Die Juden sind uns
Ge-
schäft
iss
Geschäft!
Der Stürmer
Jud Rennert

rmer
Juda
ſer Unglück

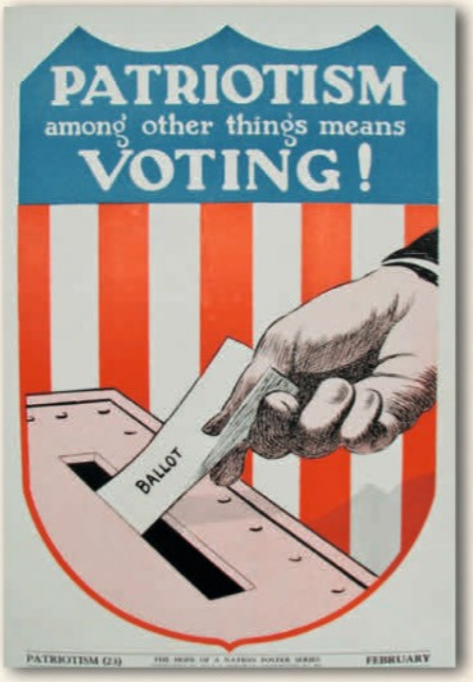
THE STATE'S VOICE

THE WRITING WAS ON THE WALL

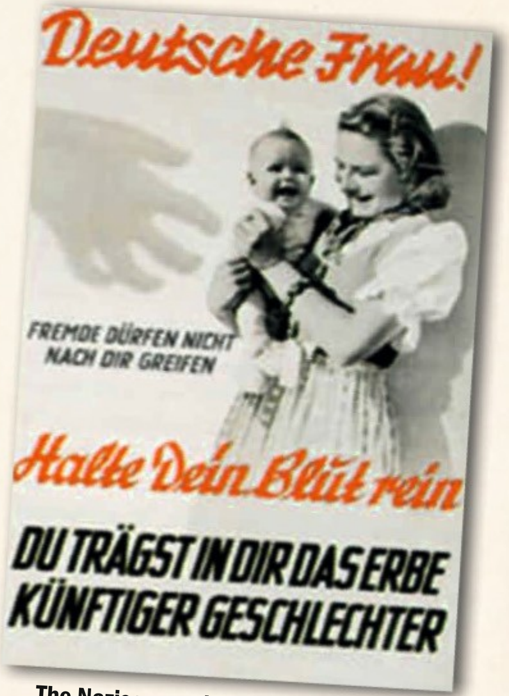
German women must keep their blood pure; tuberculosis quietly spreads in the lungs of healthy Americans; and good communist children spend their holidays at school. These were some of the messages on campaign posters in the 1930s when government notices were pasted on walls and fences around the world.



The leaders *of the Axis powers featured on this poster from 1938. Below the portraits, children rejoice over Japan's military alliance with Hitler and Mussolini.*


PATRIOTISM
among other things means
VOTING!
BALLOT
PATRIOTISM (23)
FEBRUARY

'Patriotism' *was the key word in this major Stateside campaign from 1937, which called on Americans to fulfil their patriotic duty by voting in the forthcoming elections.*


Deutsche Frau!
FREMDE DÜRFEN NICHT NACH DIR GREIFEN
Halte Dein Blut rein
DU TRÄGST IN DIR DAS ERBE KÜNFTIGER GESCHLECHTER

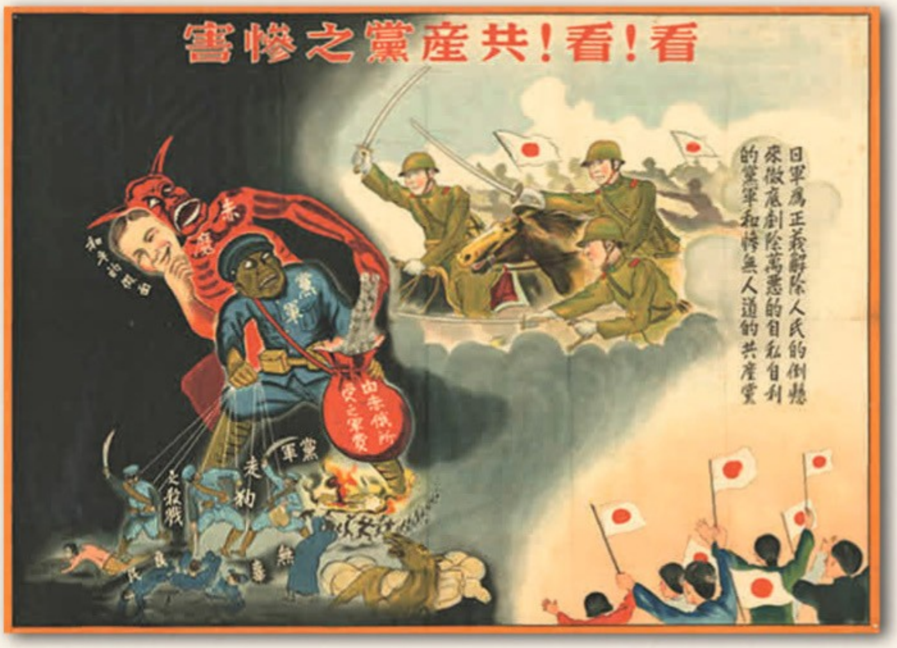
The Nazis warned *German women to keep their blood pure. This poster says "Don't let strangers grab you – you carry the legacy of future generations".*

NATIONALISM

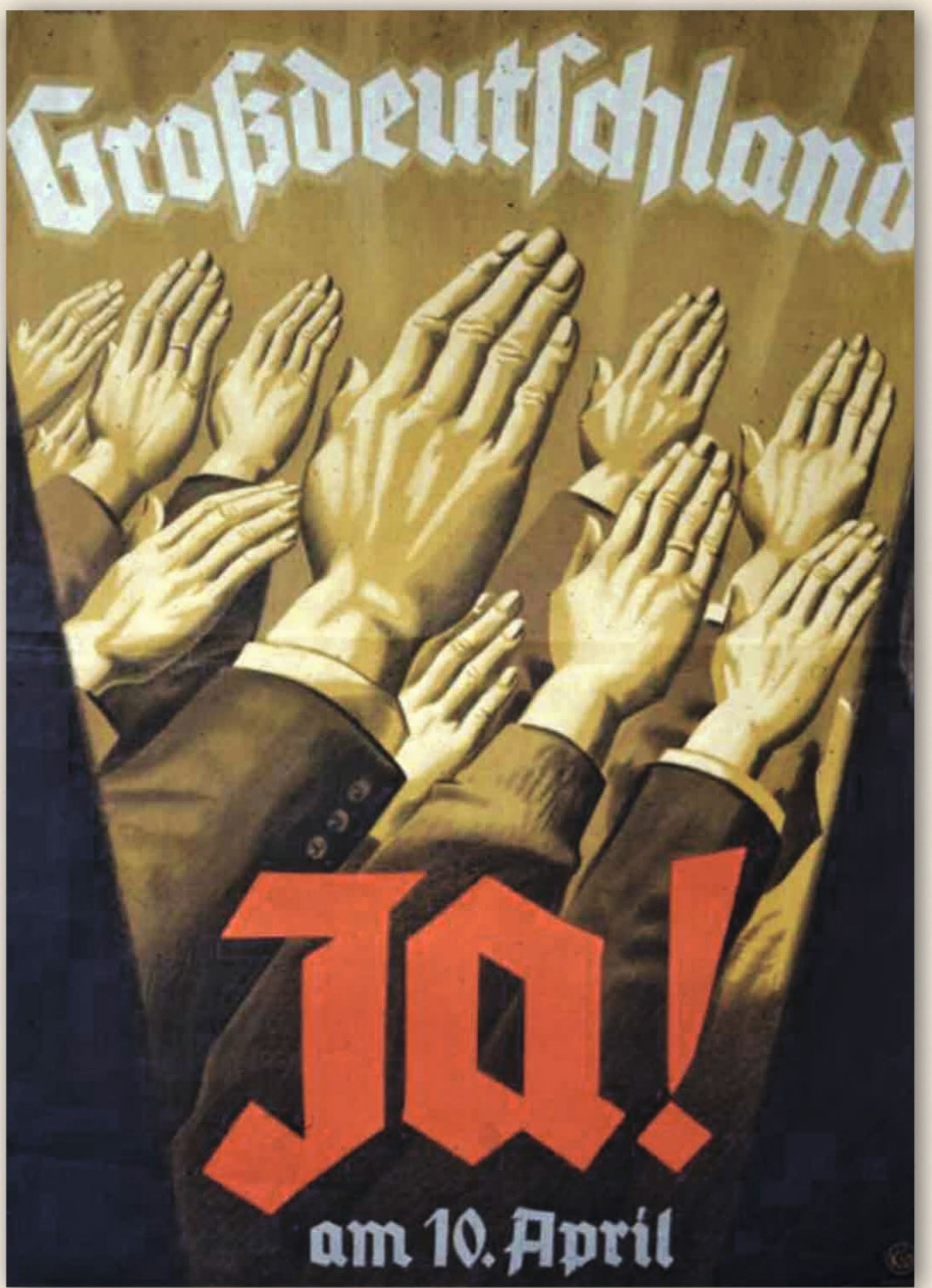
Common enemies unified nations

Defining a common foe was an effective way of creating unity. Propaganda often featured images of foreign enemies that threatened a nation's bid for greatness or domestic enemies that threatened the nation's sense of identity – such as the 'Jewish threat' in Nazi Germany. Such campaigns whipped up nationalist sentiments and gave citizens' a sense of shared responsibility for the future well-being of the state. People who did not actively participate in fighting these enemies could be labelled as new threats. There was no forum for opposing such propaganda.

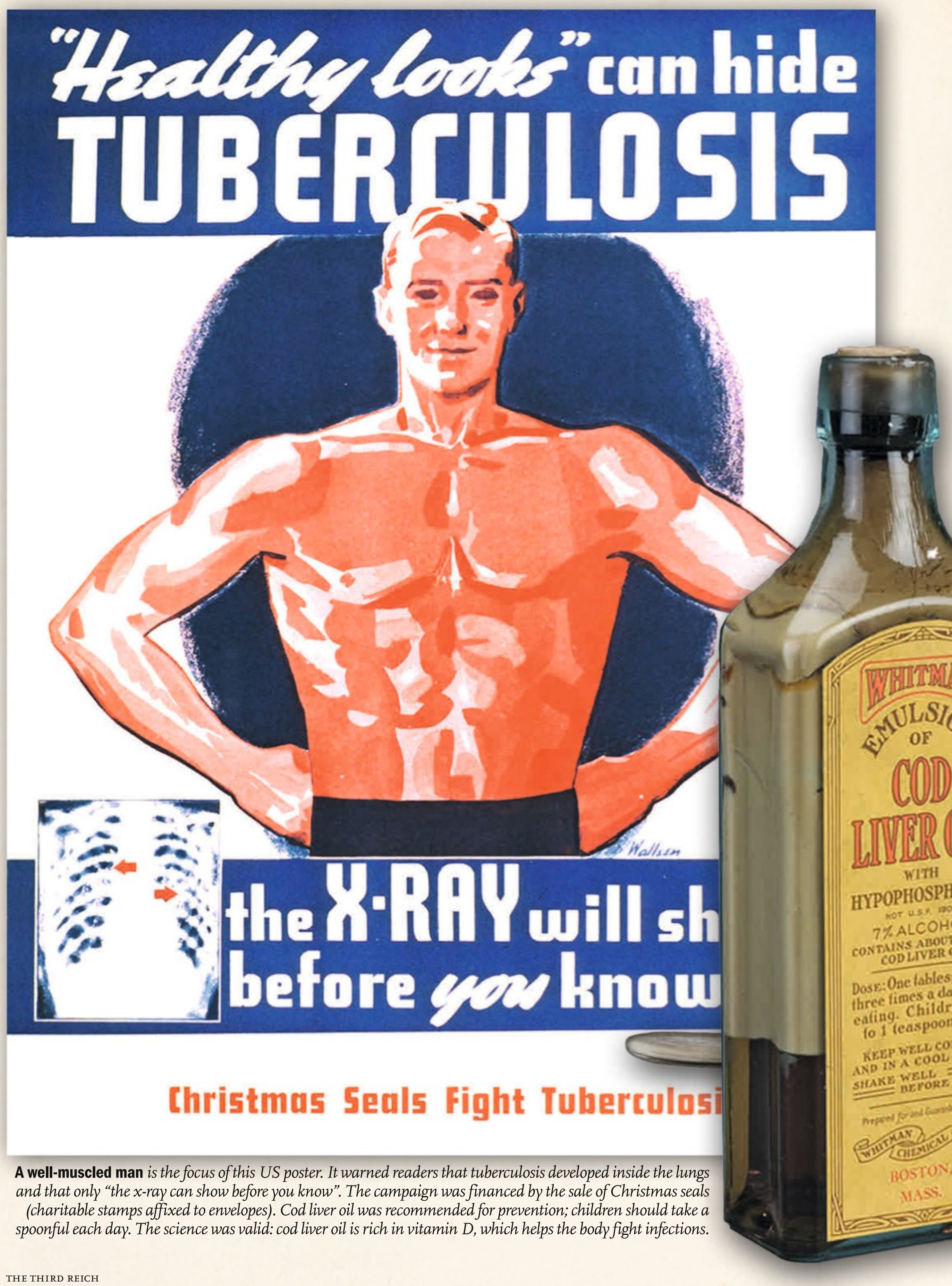
In the 1930s, *most homes had a wireless. This technology enabled political leaders including Roosevelt, Churchill, De Gaulle, Hitler and Mussolini to speak directly to their people.*


看！看！共產黨之慘害
日軍為正義解除人民的倒懸
來徹底剷除萬惡的自私自利
的黨軍和特無人道的共產黨

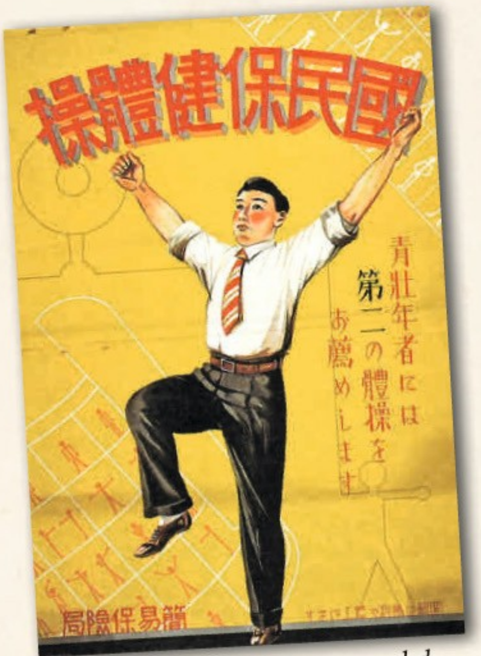
Demonic communists *are exploiting the Chinese people according to this poster. The idea is that a sword-wielding Japanese cavalry would be a welcome liberation force in China, where evil communists in blue uniforms received large bags of money from the Western devil himself.*



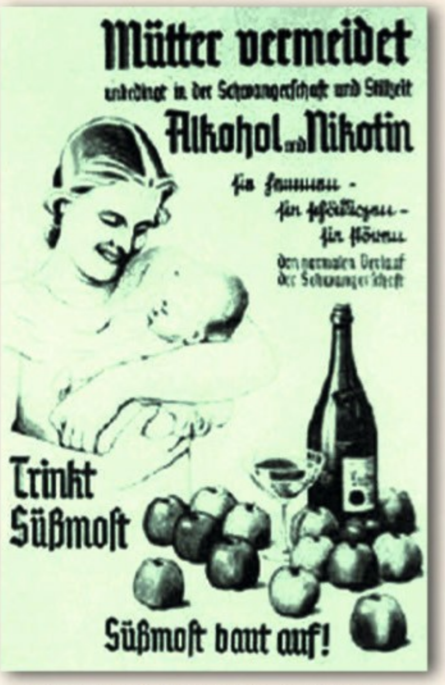
A referendum on the *Anschluss* *(the annexation of Austria) was held on 10th April, 1938. Balloting took place across Germany and Austria, and voters were required answer 'yes' or 'no' to the proposed unification of the two states. This poster for the referendum leaves no doubt that voting 'yes' will result in a* Großdeutschland *(Greater Germany). 99 percent of the turnout responded in favour.*


"Healthy looks" can hide
TUBERCULOSIS
Wallsen
the X-RAY will sh
before you know
Christmas Seals Fight Tuberculosi
WHITMA
EMULSIO
OF
COD
LIVER O
WITH
HYPOPHOSPH
7% ALCOHO
CONTAINS ABOUT
COD LIVER
DOSE: One tables
three times a da
eating. Childr
to 1 teaspoon
KEEP WELL CO
AND IN A COOL
SHAKE WELL
BEFORE
Prepared for and Guara
WHITMAN CHEMICAL
BOSTON,
MASS.

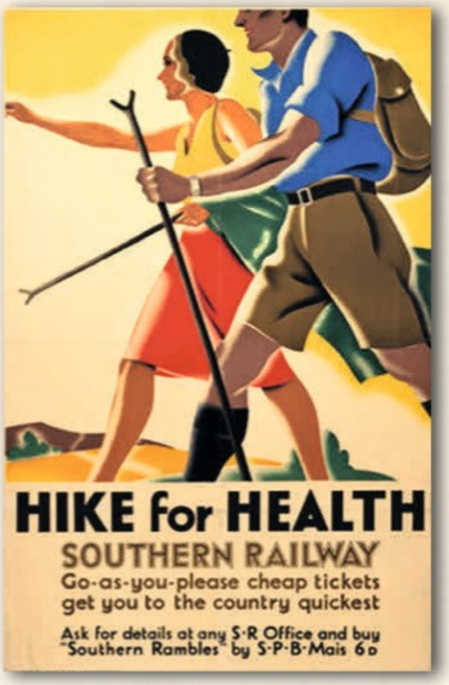
A well-muscled man *is the focus of this US poster. It warned readers that tuberculosis developed inside the lungs and that only "the x-ray can show before you know". The campaign was financed by the sale of Christmas seals (charitable stamps affixed to envelopes). Cod liver oil was recommended for prevention; children should take a spoonful each day. The science was valid: cod liver oil is rich in vitamin D, which helps the body fight infections.*


國民保健體操
青壯年者には
第二の體操を
お薦めします
簡易保險局

Sedentary office work *was regarded as unhealthy in Japan as far back as 1930. This poster recommends performing gymnastics exercises regularly during working hours.*


Mütter vermeidet
unbedingt in der Schwangerschaft und Stillzeit
Alkohol und Nikotin
Den normalen Verlauf
der Schwangerschaft
Trinkt
Süßmost
Süßmost baut auf!

According to this poster, *smoking is unhealthy, especially for women. The link between smoking and lung cancer was discovered in Nazi Germany, which ran the world's first anti-smoking campaigns.*

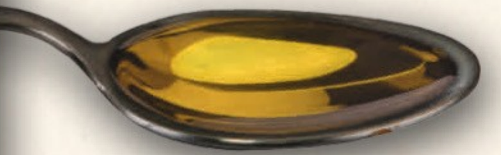

HIKE for HEALTH
SOUTHERN RAILWAY
Go-as-you-please cheap tickets
get you to the country quickest
Ask for details at any S·R Office and buy
"Southern Rambles" by S·P·B·Mais 6D

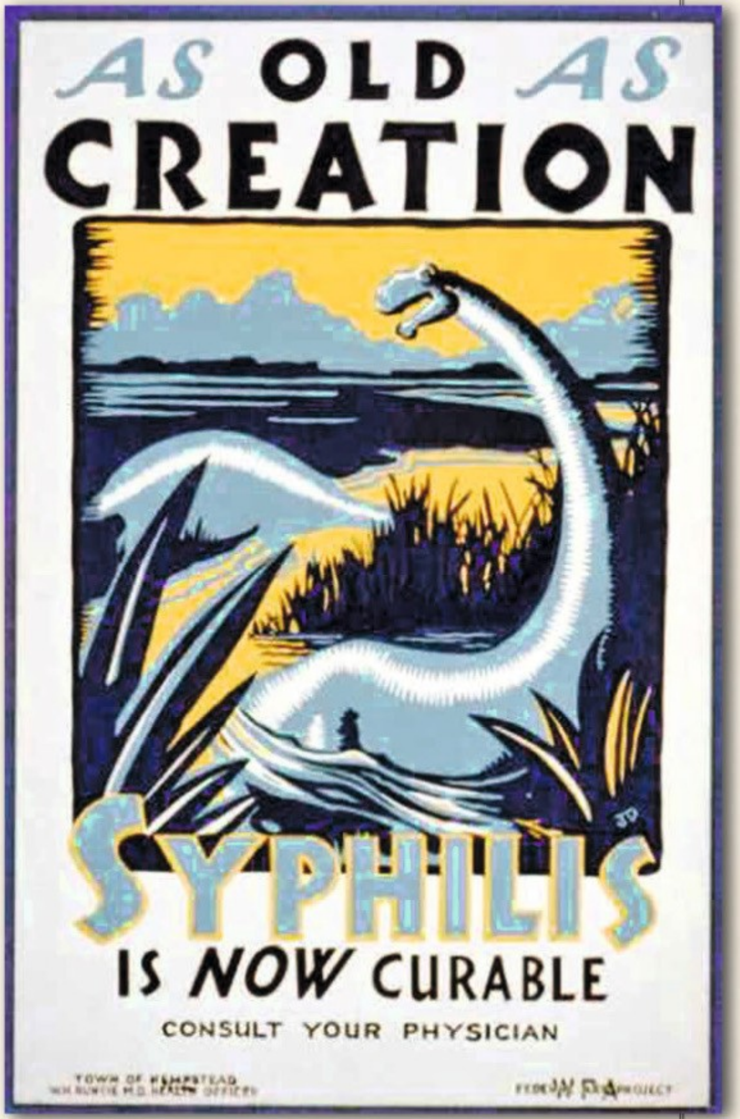
Healthy walks *were popular in Britain, but this poster could just as well have originated in Germany, where the Nazis promoted healthy exercise in much the same way.*

HEALTH

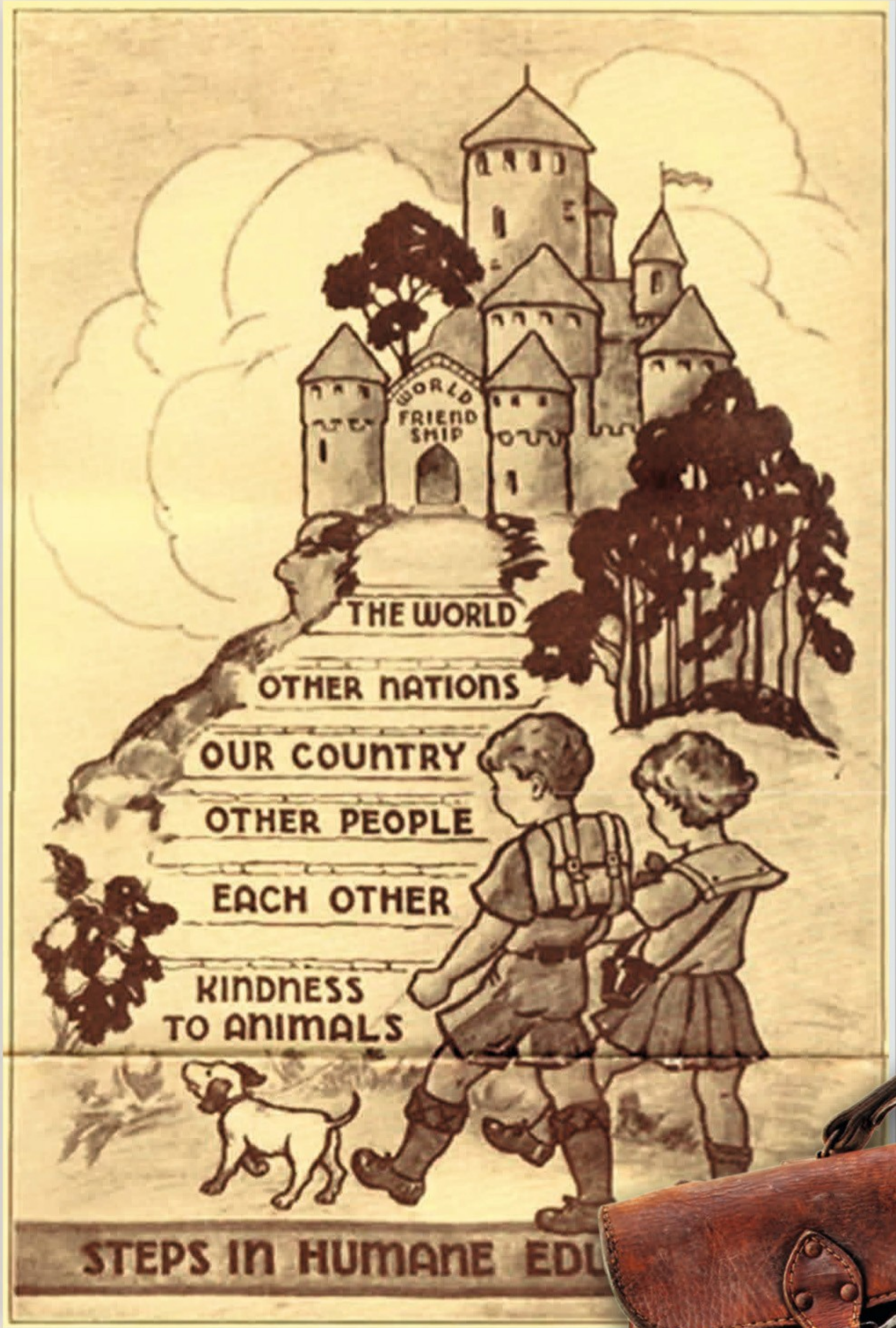
Science and reason cured diseases

Poverty and hunger characterised everyday life during the economic crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s, and the population became more susceptible to diseases as a result. Public health campaigns were used to address the problem. Instead of scaring people into taking action with depictions of sick, miserable people, the posters encouraged people to believe that good health was possible. Healthy people were seen as role models, and countries promoted the idea that common sense combined with scientific advances could cure even serious diseases.




AS OLD AS
CREATION
SYPHILIS
IS NOW CURABLE
CONSULT YOUR PHYSICIAN
TOWN OF HEMPSTEAD
FEDERAL ART PROJECT

Even dinosaurs *were plagued by syphilis, or so this poster from 1937 claimed. It also promised that a cure was available for the dreaded disease. But while penicillin was on its way, it only became widely available in 1943.*

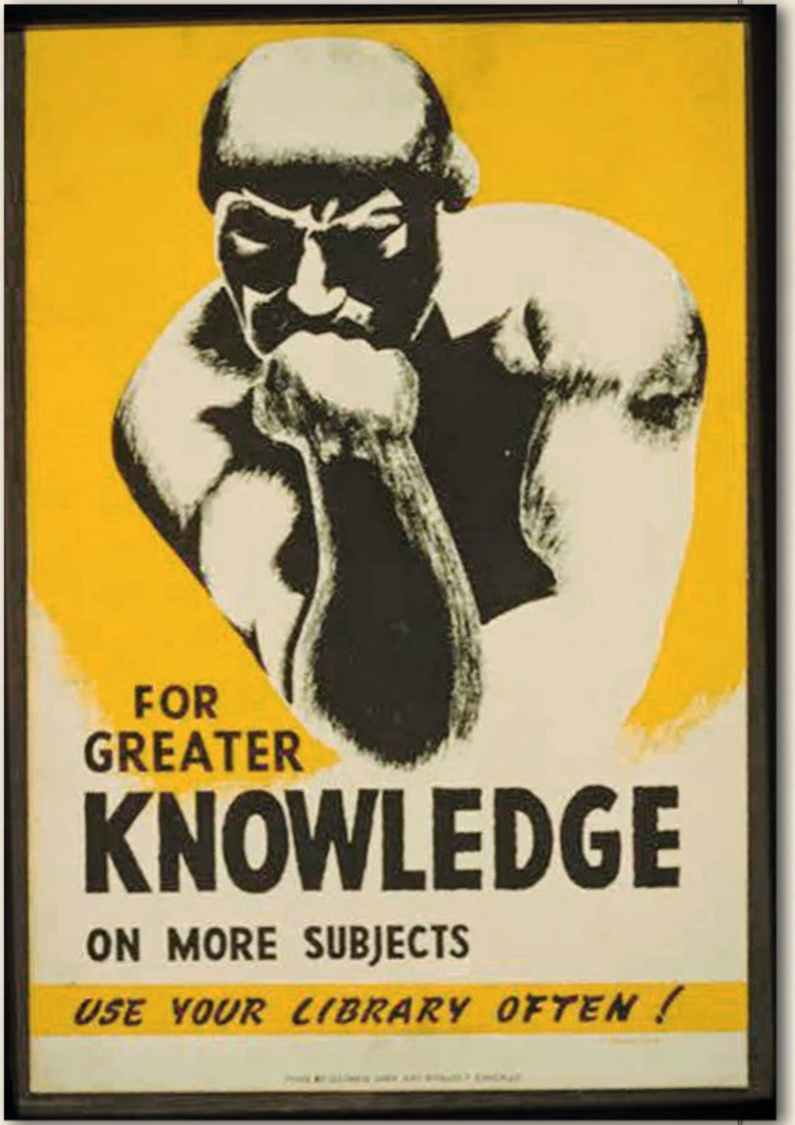

WORLD FRIENDSHIP
THE WORLD
OTHER NATIONS
OUR COUNTRY
OTHER PEOPLE
EACH OTHER
KINDNESS TO ANIMALS
STEPS IN HUMANE EDU

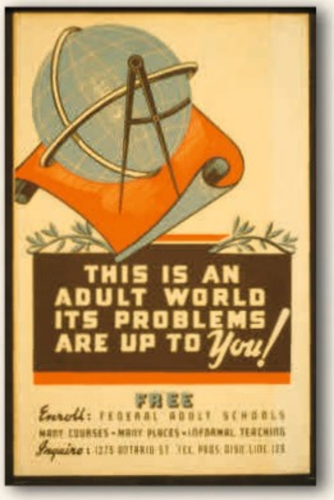
According to the Latham Foundation *in the US, people needed to master kindness to animals as part of a humane education. During the 1930s, the organisation ran campaigns in the United States to develop compassion and eradicate cruelty. The hope was that such methods could prevent a repetition of the horrors of WWI.*

EDUCATION

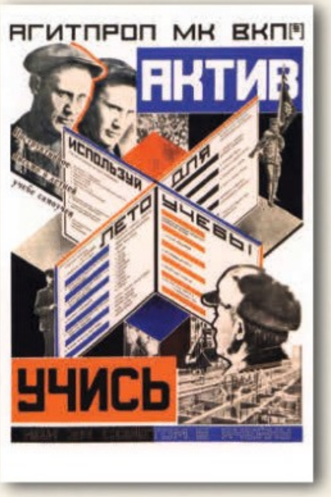
Targeted effort eradicated illiteracy

At the beginning of the 20th century, the majority of the world's population couldn't read or write. For example, in Imperial Russia, most men were only taught how to write their own name. That changed with the revolution: following a rigorous campaign by the Soviets, 22 years later, 90 percent of Russian men and 72.5 percent of Russian women could read and write. In the United States, education was prioritised during the Great Depression, while Nazi Germany imposed strict rules about what the population should and should not know: all books written by non-Aryans were banned, as was any criticism of the Nazi regime.


FOR GREATER
KNOWLEDGE
ON MORE SUBJECTS
USE YOUR LIBRARY OFTEN!


THIS IS AN ADULT WORLD ITS PROBLEMS ARE UP TO You!
FREE
Enroll: FEDERAL ADULT SCHOOLS
MANY COURSES - MANY PLACES - INFORMAL TEACHING
Inquire:

Education *was prioritised in the US during the 1930s. Adults who had not attended high school were offered free evening classes.*

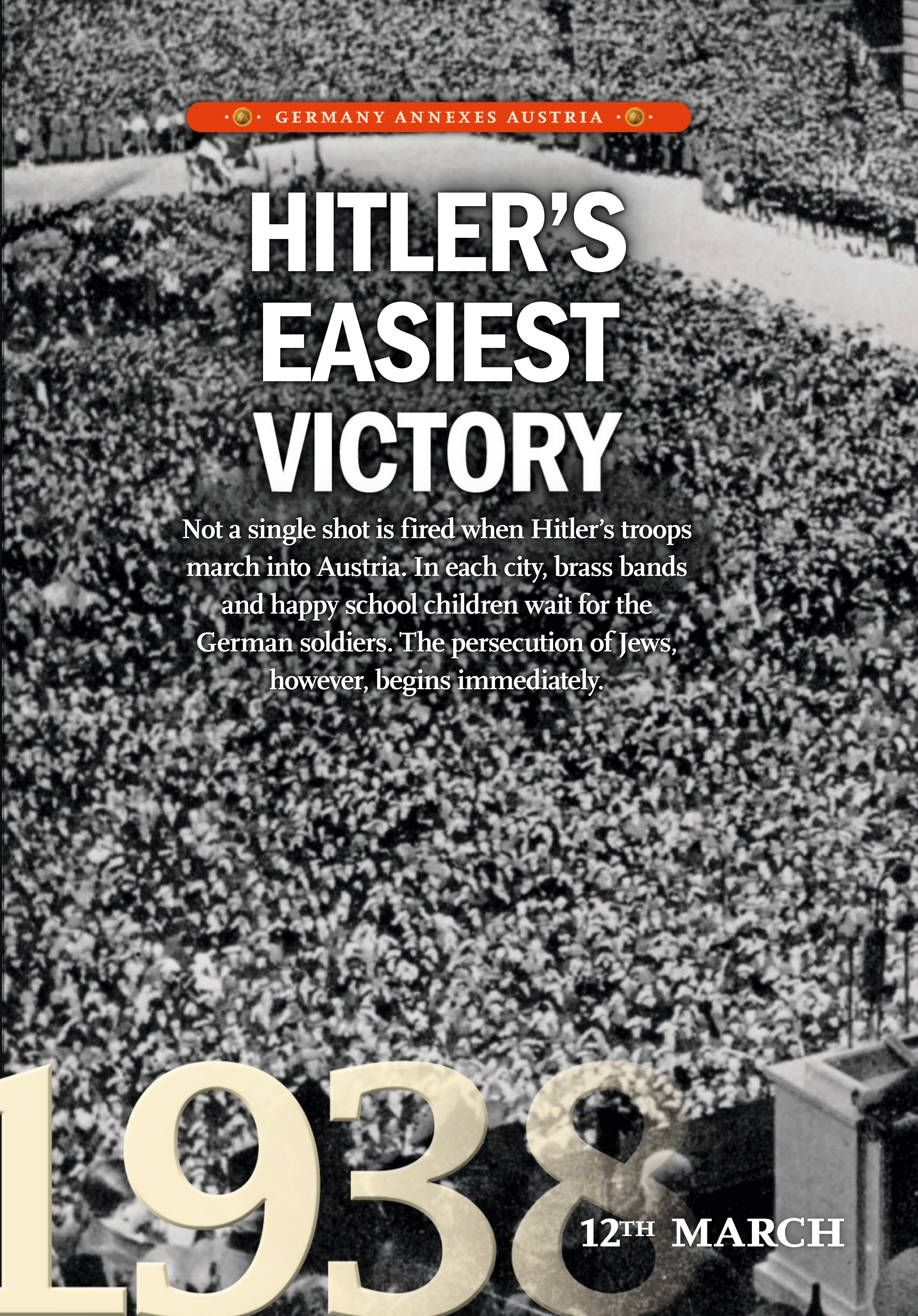

АГИТПРОП МК ВКП(б)
АКТИВ
ИСПОЛЬЗУЙ
ЛЕТО
ДЛЯ
УЧЕБЫ
УЧИСЬ

"Spend your holiday *at school" was the message of this Soviet poster, encouraging young communists to spend their holidays educating themselves.*

The number of libraries *exploded in the US during the 1930s. The opportunity to read and learn for free was promoted during the depression that followed the Wall Street Crash in 1929. The government supported the use of libraries with large campaigns that quite literally encouraged everyone to wise up.*

K. Morgenroth u.
M. Schmidt
Kinder, was wißt Ihr vom Führer?
DER VERLAG

This children's book, *offered Germany's infants a sanitised, official account of the Führer's upbringing and his glorious rise to power.*



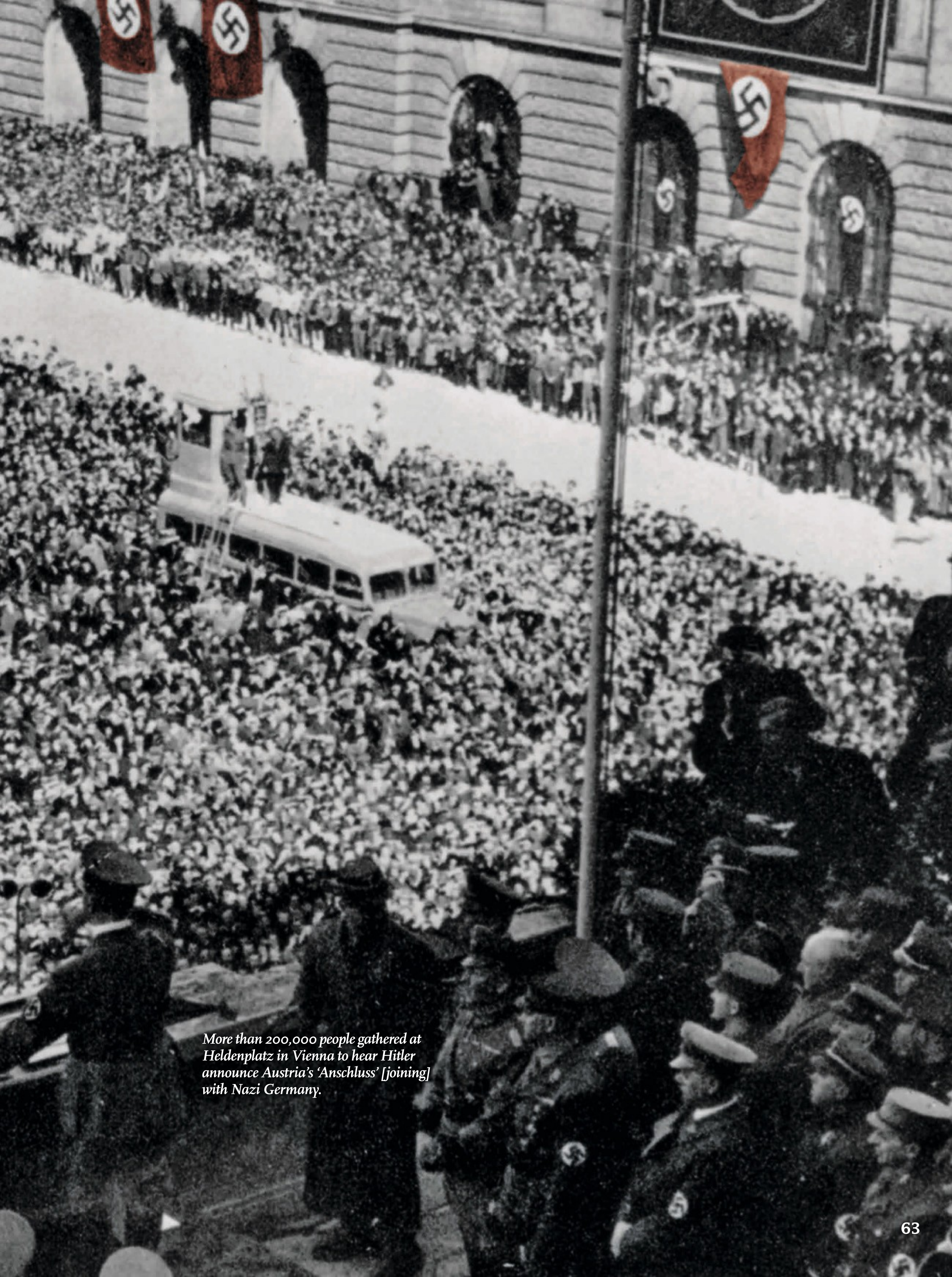
GERMANY ANNEXES AUSTRIA

HITLER'S EASIEST VICTORY

Not a single shot is fired when Hitler's troops march into Austria. In each city, brass bands and happy school children wait for the German soldiers. The persecution of Jews, however, begins immediately.

1938

12TH MARCH



More than 200,000 people gathered at Heldenplatz in Vienna to hear Hitler announce Austria's 'Anschluss' [joining] with Nazi Germany.

Austria, 1938

THE STAGE IS SET

Bloody battles between political factions in the early 1930s result in the Austrian chancellor introducing a Catholic national dictatorship. The country is impoverished, and unemployment is high. Many Austrians – not just Nazis – want unification with Germany so they can experience economic growth with Hitler in power.

When Adolf Hitler stepped out onto the balcony, a human sea began to boil under him. Around 200,000 Austrians had gathered in the square in front of the Hofburg, Vienna's old Imperial Palace, to hear him. With a lump in his throat, he stated that their country was now part of Germany. The crowd responded with thundering cheers and Nazi salutes.

It was 15th March, 1938. Austria had just ceased to exist as an independent state, but no one mourned its loss.

On the contrary, it seemed that the country had been waiting to surrender, as three days earlier 50,000 German soldiers had crossed the border.

The Austrians hadn't fired a single shot to defend their country, not one soldier was injured in battle. Instead, the Germans were welcomed by brass bands and happy children who'd been given the day off school for the occasion.

Farmland abandoned

The majority of Austrians had no great loyalty for their country, which had been the biggest loser in World War I. At the outbreak of the war in 1914, they'd been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – a great European power with 50 million inhabitants and a territory that spread across Central Europe and the Balkans.

When the war ended four years later, the emperor had abdicated, the bulk of its territory was lost, and Austria had become an insignificant nation of seven million inhabitants.

A third of those lived in Vienna, which once served as the administrative centre of the empire. Now the many thousands of officials had no empire to administer. "Hydrocephalus Vienna" was how some Austrians unkindly referred to their capital, which no longer served any major purpose other than to serve as a burden on the reduced state.

Industrialisation lagged behind the rest of Europe leaving Austria a poor and backward agrarian country. Against this background, most of the politicians in parliament believed that the country had no future. During the peace negotiations, they'd wanted to be annexed by Germany, but the victors Britain and France refused. They feared that such an annexation would lead to a new, stronger Greater Germany.

The Austrians were on their own, and their politicians were deeply divided about which way to go. The dominant

The German soldiers showed no signs of fear when they entered Austria. They met no resistance.

Christian Social Party wanted a dictatorship, while the left hoped for a proletarian revolution like Russia. Factory owners put up resistance against the workers' unions. Both sides employed armed guards, and frequently clashed violently.

In 1927, two people were killed in a conflict between the two sides. But when the perpetrators from the right-wing *Frontkämpfervereinigung* (Front Combat Association) escaped punishment, the leftists set fire to the Palace of Justice. Vienna's police chief gave orders to shoot at the demonstrators and 89 died in the subsequent hail of bullets.

AUSTRIA BECOMES A DICTATORSHIP

The Wall Street Crash of 1929 sent shock waves through the Austrian population, where unemployment rose to 500,000 – over 20 percent of the population.

In this desperate situation, the Austrians' admiration for Germany's new strong man, Adolf Hitler, rose. After taking the reins of power in Germany in 1933, he began to perform apparent economic miracles: production grew, unemployment fell, and the German standard of living increased.

The Austrian Nazi party experienced a marked increase in membership and it put pressure on the Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss. Party leaders demanded new elections so that they could repeat Hitler's success and gain power in parliament.

But the Christian-Social chancellor fought back. He appointed himself dictator: Dollfuss sent MPs home, banned political parties, and abolished freedom of the press.

Hitler increased the pressure by launching a trade war against Austria: all Germans who entered the neighbouring country on holiday had to pay a tax of 1,000 Reichsmarks. The new tax paralysed Austria's tourism and cost the country dearly, but Dollfuss stood firm and imposed further decrees.

BOMBINGS TERRORISED POPULATION

After New Year 1934, Austrian Nazis launched a wave of terrorist attacks in order to destabilise the country. In the first week of January, 140 bombs exploded.

Hitler hoped his Austrian minions could carry out a Nazi takeover using the same strategies that had handed him power in Germany – by weakening the Dollfuss government with street violence before gaining power democratically. But after seven months of terror and violence, he had to admit that Dollfuss was too strong. If he wanted to control Austria, he'd have become even more heavy-handed.

On 25th July, 50 Austrian Nazis stormed the Chancellery and shot Dollfuss.

The assassination should have been the start of a coup d'état, but Hitler had made a mistake: the coup leaders had barely proclaimed their Nazi government when Benito Mussolini intervened.

Italy's dictator had initially supported Dollfuss, whom he saw as a counterweight to the emerging Hitler. Now Mussolini reacted resolutely: in unequivocal terms he condemned the coup and made it clear that he would go to war if Germany did not stay away. A surprised Hitler was forced to publicly denounce the death of Dollfuss and deny the »

1892-1934

NAME **DOLLFUSS**

TITLE CHANCELLOR OF AUSTRIA

Dictator tried to rescue Austria from chaos

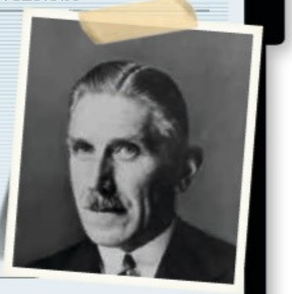
Engelbert Dollfuss became Austrian chancellor in 1932, but his government was weak. In 1933, Dollfuss closed parliament and appointed himself leader of a Catholic-national dictatorship that would rescue Austria from falling into the hands of either the fascists or communists.

- **Lawyer and head of Austrian Christian Social Party.**
- **Was shot in 1934 in a failed Nazi coup attempt.**

1879-1969

NAME **VON PAPEN**

TITLE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN VIENNA



Hitler wanted German envoy murdered

When Hitler became chancellor in 1933, Franz von Papen became vice chancellor, but he opposed the Nazis. Hitler did not dare touch him but sent him to Vienna. The plan was that von Papen would be murdered.

- **German Ambassador to Vienna 1933-38.**
- **German Ambassador to Turkey 1939-44.**

1897-1977

NAME **SCHUSCHNIGG**

TITLE DOLLFUSS' SUCCESSOR

Austrian chancellor sent to KZ camp

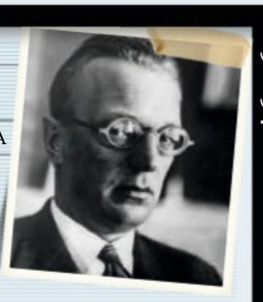
Kurt Schuschnigg took over the Austrian chancellor's post after Dollfuss's death. In 1938, Schuschnigg refused to comply with Hitler's conditions, leading to his internment, first in prison and later at a KZ camp. Schuschnigg survived and was liberated in 1945.

- **Head of Austrian Christian Social Party.**
- **Professor of State Law in the United States 1948-67.**

1892-1946

NAME **SEYSS-INQUART**

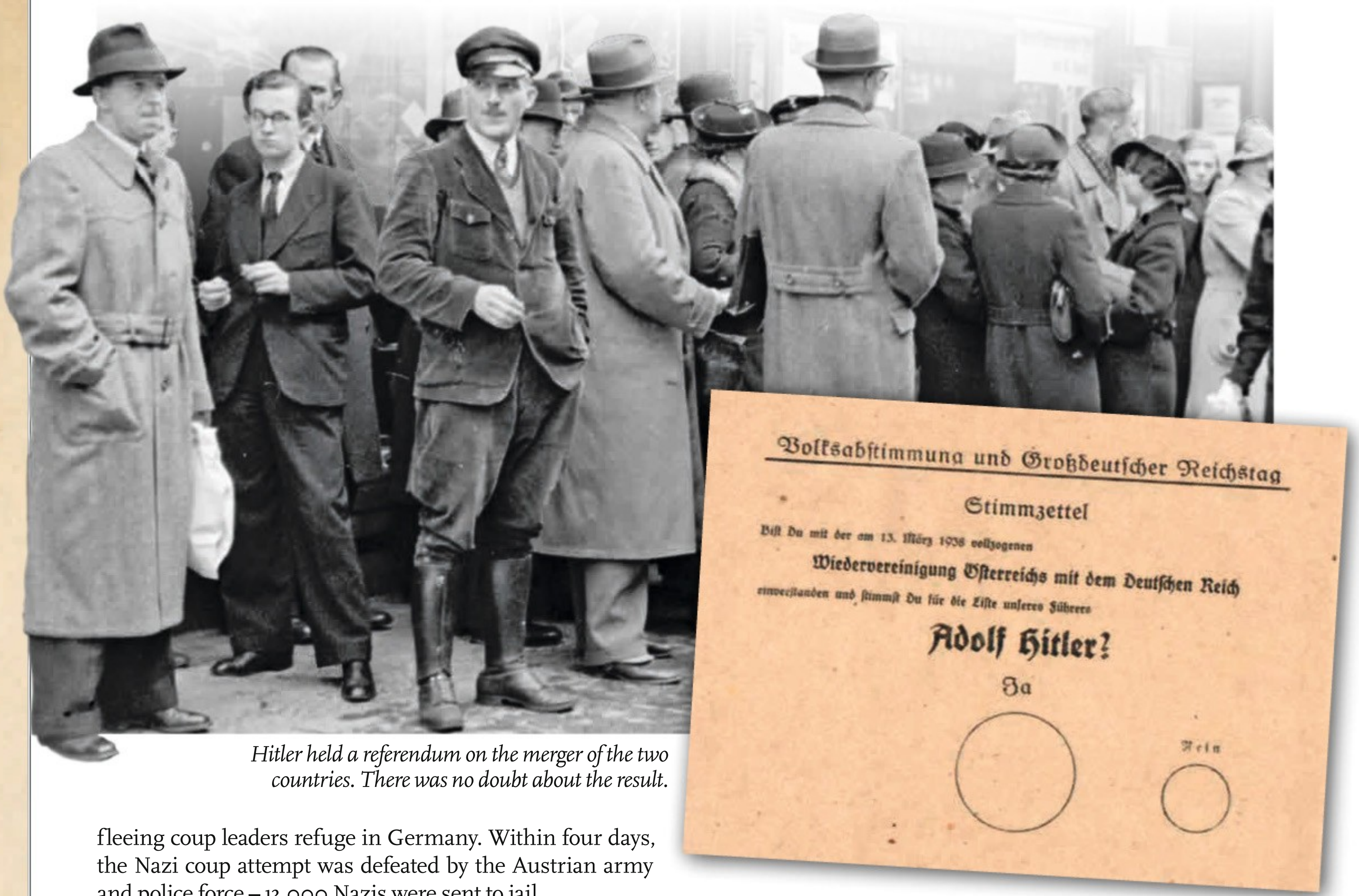
TITLE HITLER'S MAN IN AUSTRIA



Stooge was chancellor for two days

Arthur Seyss-Inquart paved the way for Germany's annexation of Austria. On Hitler's order he assumed the post of chancellor after Schuschnigg. Seyss-Inquart drew up the papers that actually dissolved the Austrian state. At the same time, he joined the Nazi party.

- **Interior Minister in Schuschnigg's Cabinet.**
- **Enthusiastic supporter of Nazism after Anschluss.**



Volksabſtimmung und Großdeutſcher Reichstag

Stimmzettel

Biſt Du mit der am 13. März 1938 vollzogenen

Wiedervereinigung Öſterreichs mit dem Deutſchen Reich

einverſtanden und ſtimmſt Du für die Liſte unſeres Führers

Adolf Hitler?

Ja ○

Nein ○

Hitler held a referendum on the merger of the two countries. There was no doubt about the result.

fleeing coup leaders refuge in Germany. Within four days, the Nazi coup attempt was defeated by the Austrian army and police force – 13,000 Nazis were sent to jail.

Hitler's desperation

Hitler continued his subversive tactics against Dollfuss's successor, Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg.

In 1936 Hitler succeeded in pushing through an agreement that guaranteed the Nazis places in the Austrian government. In return Hitler promised an end to the violence. The promise did not even last a year before more bombs shook the country.

Germany was busy rearming in preparation for war, but the country lacked raw materials, labour and currency.

Annexing Austria was more important than ever. The country had rich deposits of iron ore and copper as well as wood. In addition, Austrian Jews had savings totalling 1.4 billion Reichsmarks – 20 times more than the reserves in the weak German national bank.

In January 1938 Hitler ordered another coup be attempted. The plans were discovered, however, and the ringleaders exposed, carrying orders signed by Rudolf Hess – Hitler's deputy in Berlin.

According to the plans the German ambassador to Vienna Franz von Papen was to be murdered in the confusion to make the coup look like an internal affair. The coup aimed to provide Hitler with a welcome opportunity to get rid of a political opponent – von Papen had been opposed to the idea of annexing Austria. Even though Hitler's plans had been thwarted this time, police stormed the Austrian Nazi party headquarters again.

Mussolini had switched sides in order to secure Hitler's support for his conquest of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) and did not intervene. Neither France nor Great Britain could help Austria – the French were paralysed by a domestic crisis, and British Prime Minister Chamberlain was happy to concede Hitler anything to preserve peace.

Schuschnigg fears for his life

On 12th February, 1938, the Austrian chancellor received an invitation he could not refuse. Hitler wanted to see him at his Berghof residence in the Bavarian Alps.

Schuschnigg was suspicious. He still believed in a negotiated solution but had taken precautions. If he was not back in Austria before 21.00 that evening the Austrian army were ordered to close the borders.

When Schuschnigg politely complimented the view from Hitler's windows over the mountains Hitler brushed his comments aside: "We did not gather here to speak of the fine view or of the weather," he snarled as he laid out his demands. In a largely one-sided discussion, the Führer claimed he was a better Austrian than Schuschnigg, adding: "I have a historic mission and this mission I will fulfil because Providence has destined me to do so. Who is not with me will be crushed!" Hitler roared. Schuschnigg had to release all imprisoned Nazis and lift the ban on the party. He was to dismiss the military chief-of-staff, subordinate his foreign policy to Germany, and appoint Austrian Nazi Arthur Seyss-Inquart as interior minister. So Hitler would gain control of the police force.

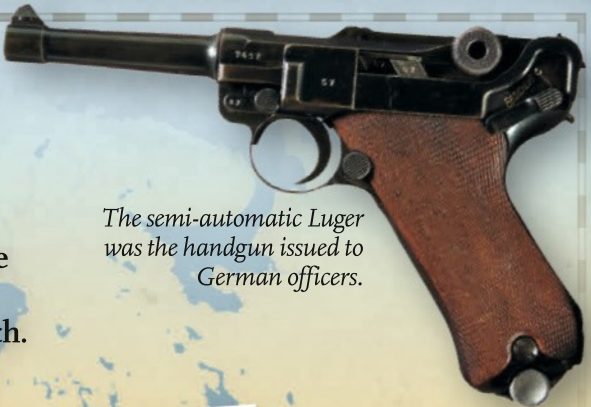
748,000,000
Reichsmarks from Austria's treasury supported the German economy, while Austria's iron mines supplied raw material for Germany's arms industry.

Referendum triggers coup

"I'm glad to say, however, that the Austrian Chancellor has shown insight and satisfactory agreement has been reached

Anschluss paved the way for Hitler's Europe

The annexation of Austria proved to be a useful experience for Hitler. He learned to manipulate sceptical Western powers and made tactical agreements with his opponents in pursuit of his goal – the German Reich.



The semi-automatic Luger was the handgun issued to German officers.

Germany

Growth aroused admiration

Since Adolf Hitler's takeover of power in 1933, Germany had eradicated unemployment. German economic prosperity aroused admiration in neighbouring countries.

Austria

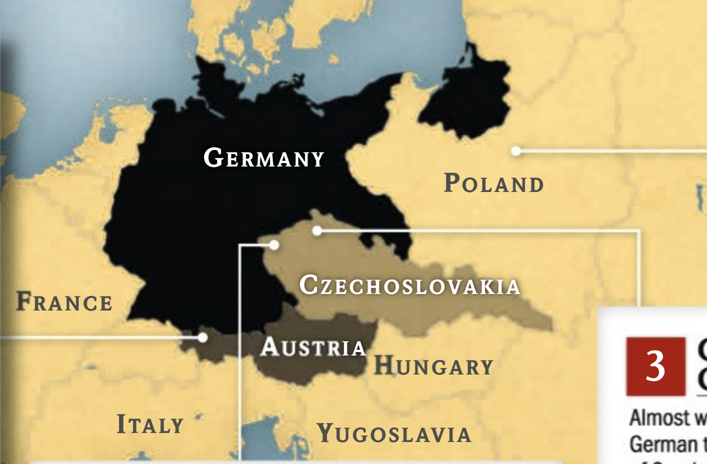
German superiority

Austria was hit hard by economic crisis, political turmoil and terror. Annexation with Germany gave Austria peace, order and prosperity.

Czechoslovakia

A patchwork of minorities

Czechoslovakia was one of several new, small countries that emerged from the division of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire after World War I. The country was was easy to dismantle.



1 Hitler incorporates Austria into Germany

German soldiers enter Austria on 12th March, 1938. They are met with elation, and at a subsequent referendum 99.7 percent of them vote yes for annexation with Germany.

No Austrian border guards intervened as the Germans crossed the border.

2 Home of the Reich

After the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, around three million ethnic Germans live in Czechoslovakia. Hitler plans to restore them to the "Greater German Reich" by invading the Sudetenland. The French and British accept the invasion.

3 Germany takes Czechoslovakia

Almost without any resistance, German troops occupy the rest of Czechoslovakia on 15th March, 1939. Divided in two, Slovakia becomes a vassal state before the Germans occupy it after an uprising in 1944.

4 Invasion of Poland

After concluding a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, Hitler invades Poland on 1st September, 1939. Britain and France declare war on Germany.

with Austria," Hitler said in a radio speech a few days after the meeting. But Schuschnigg had decided to resist. Austria should never be part of Nazi Germany, Austria could and would remain independent, he stated in a number of inflammatory speeches to his compatriots. *"Rotweissrot bis in den tot!"* (Red-white-red until we are dead!) he declared, referring to the colours of the Austrian flag.

Schuschnigg's speeches were greeted with tumultuous applause, so the chancellor decided to secure popular support. On 9th March, he issued a referendum to determine whether the Austrians should retain their independence. The vote would take place just four days later, and a hectic election campaign began. To Hitler's great annoyance, the Austrian chancellor was greeted everywhere he went with cheers and rejoicing. Time was running out, Hitler acknowledged. If the Austrians voted yes to remaining independent, his plans for taking over the country – and establishing a Greater Germany – would take a long time. The vote should be prevented at all costs.

On 11th March, Hitler decided to force a solution to the problem. At 10.00 he called Vienna and threatened the use of military force unless the referendum was postponed. Schuschnigg was given four hours to answer.

CHANCELLOR LOSES BATTLE OF WILLS

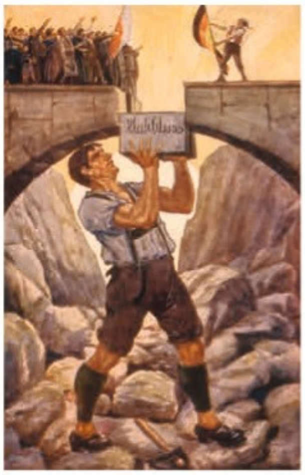
Kurt Schuschnigg hesitated. He knew a military conflict would cost the Austrians dear. In the middle of the afternoon he called his loyal cabinet members together. From the window of the Chancellery, he could hear the patriotic song *"O, Du mein Österreich"* (Oh, thou my Austria!) played in the streets over scratchy loudspeakers to raise people's spirits.

At 14.45 he promised Hitler he would cancel the referendum. The German dictator then blatantly issued new demands: Schuschnigg had to resign and Interior Minister Seyss-Inquart would take up his post. At 15.30 Schuschnigg stepped down. Before he had cleared his office Seyss-Inquart and his people moved in: "Around them began a busy coming and going of strange-looking men, with close-cropped hair, some of them completely shorn, and most of them with heavy sabre-scars across their faces," Schuschnigg noted.

At 20.15 Schuschnigg spoke over the radio for the last time. He told the Austrian people that he had postponed the referendum and was determined to avoid bloodshed. The Austrian army, which was otherwise mobilised, received orders to move away from the border and soldiers were ordered not to open fire.

Austria had capitulated and throughout the country Nazis poured into the streets to celebrate the forthcoming unification with Germany, the so-called *"Anschluss"* (Joining).

That very same evening persecution of Jewish residents began. In Vienna, where the majority of the country's Jews lived, there were violent assaults and the plundering of Jewish shops. The assaults immediately triggered a flow of refugees out of Austria. The international night trains were full and the road to Czechoslovakia was packed with cars.



Nazi propaganda said that only one stone was missing before Austrians and Germans could become one.

HITLER VISITS HIS BIRTHPLACE

Early in the morning of 12th March the German army began to move. Its advance through Austria was smooth and without delay, and by the afternoon Hitler himself drove into the annexed country – the land of his birth. His first stop was the village of Braunau am Inn where he was born in 1889.

His old childhood home had been transformed into a tavern, and earlier in the day the first German soldiers on the scene had marked the occasion by signing the innkeeper's guestbook to announce their arrival in Austria.

From Braunau the procession moved on to Linz, where the Hitler family had moved to when Adolf went to school. The motorcade travelled for 120 kilometres and thousands of happy Austrians stood along the road to pay tribute to the German dictator. After four hours, he finally arrived and was able to address his first speech to the Austrians at Linz Town Hall Square:

"If Providence once called me forth from this town to be the leader of the Reich, it must in so doing have charged me with a mission, and that mission could only be to restore my dear homeland to the German Reich. I have believed in this mission, I have lived and fought for it, and believe I have now fulfilled it."

After two days in Linz, Hitler moved on to the capital Vienna, where new cheering crowds awaited him. He'd left the city 23 years earlier as a tattered vagabond, now he was one of Europe's most powerful men – and his countrymen were ready to follow him. The results of a referendum in April 1938 showed that 99.7 percent of the population voted for the absorption of Austria into Germany.

Shortly after his radio broadcast on 11th March, Schuschnigg was arrested. He was later taken to the Dachau concentration camp where he stayed until 1945. After World War II, Schuschnigg emigrated to the United States, where he became a professor of state law at the University of St. Louis.

Schuschnigg's successor, Chancellor Seyss-Inquart, was only in his position for a few days before Austria as a nation was abolished. He later became the Reich Commissar for the occupied Netherlands, where he organised the deportation of 100,000 Jews. After the war he was convicted as a war criminal in Nuremberg and hanged in 1946.

Hitler planned to retire to Linz

The Austrian town on the Danube would become a Nazi metropolis and home to Adolf Hitler when he stepped down as Führer. The town would have an opera, theatre and an art museum.

Germany was in, Hitler's eyes, the world's leading nation, but he himself was born in Austria. Admittedly his parents, Alois and Klara, were ethnic Germans, but the dictator spent his entire childhood and youth in Austria, particularly in the city of Linz on the Danube river in northern Austria.

It was here he went to school, and as an adult described those years as the happiest of his life. It was the teachers of Linz who encouraged his interest in history. As an adult, he dreamed of making the city a Führer City alongside the cities of Berlin, Hamburg, Nuremberg and Munich.

Repeatedly he asserted that he would settle in the city once he retired as Germany's leader.

Before this could happen, however, Linz would need to be equipped with an opera, theatre and world-class museum filled with German art. Hitler managed to collect 4,000 works.

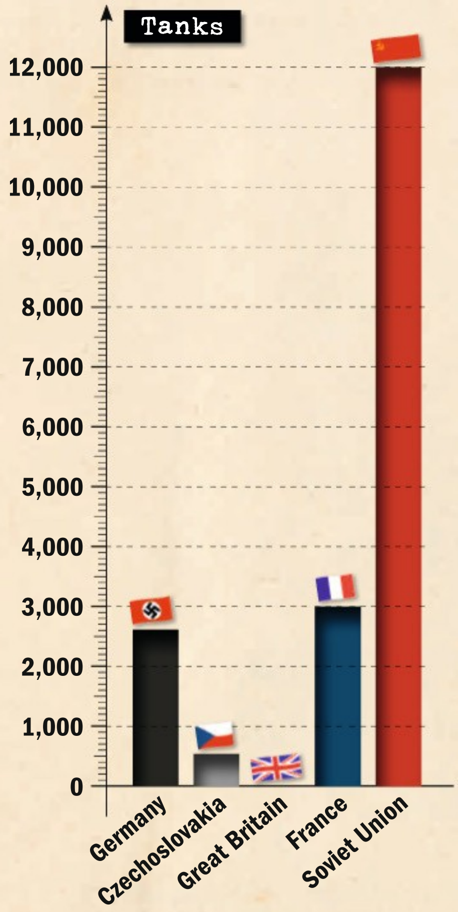
Adolf Hitler had models made of his planned Führer City Linz.

Hitler's army was not ready

Despite a massive buildup, the German army in 1938 was not ready for war with Czechoslovakia, backed by France and the Soviet Union. The Munich agreement of 30th September gave Hitler the permission he needed from France and Britain to invade the Sudetenland and its occupation took place without a fight.

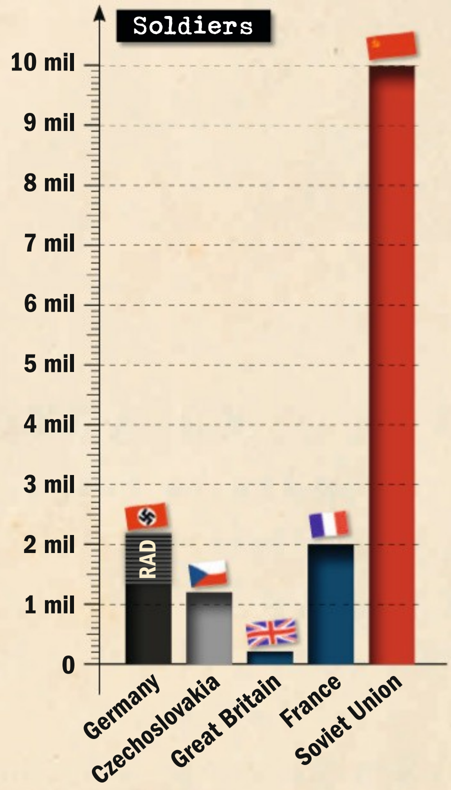
The Russians in 1937 promised the Czechs 60 new Tupolev bombers. These did not arrive until the Germans entered the country.

The 1938 military forces



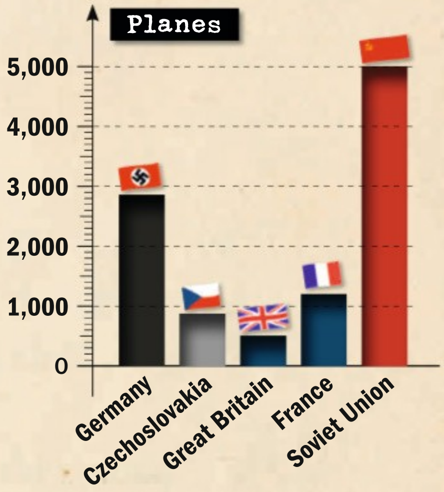
German tanks were small

Germany's many tanks were lightly armed with machine guns and 37-mm guns, whilst the Czech tanks had 75-mm guns. Great Britain was not yet ready for war.



Equal numbers of troops

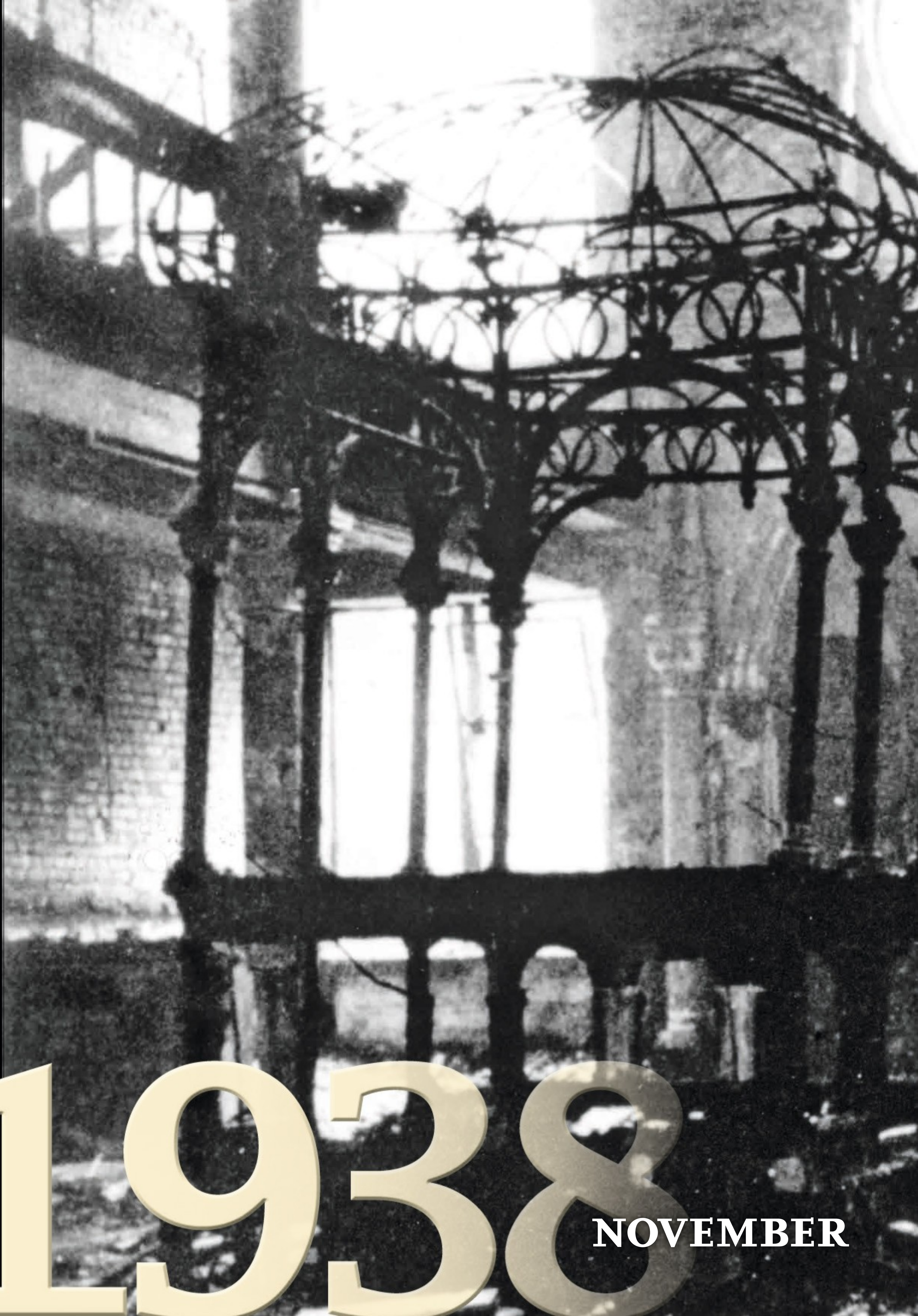
Germany and Czechoslovakia had mobilised almost equal numbers of soldiers in 1938. The German army looked larger on paper, but around half of them were conscripts.



Germany had new aircraft

The Luftwaffe had rapidly developed to give the Germans the most modern and the best-armed air force. The Soviet Union, however, was well underway to replacing its old aircraft with new ones and had promised Czechoslovakia planes too.

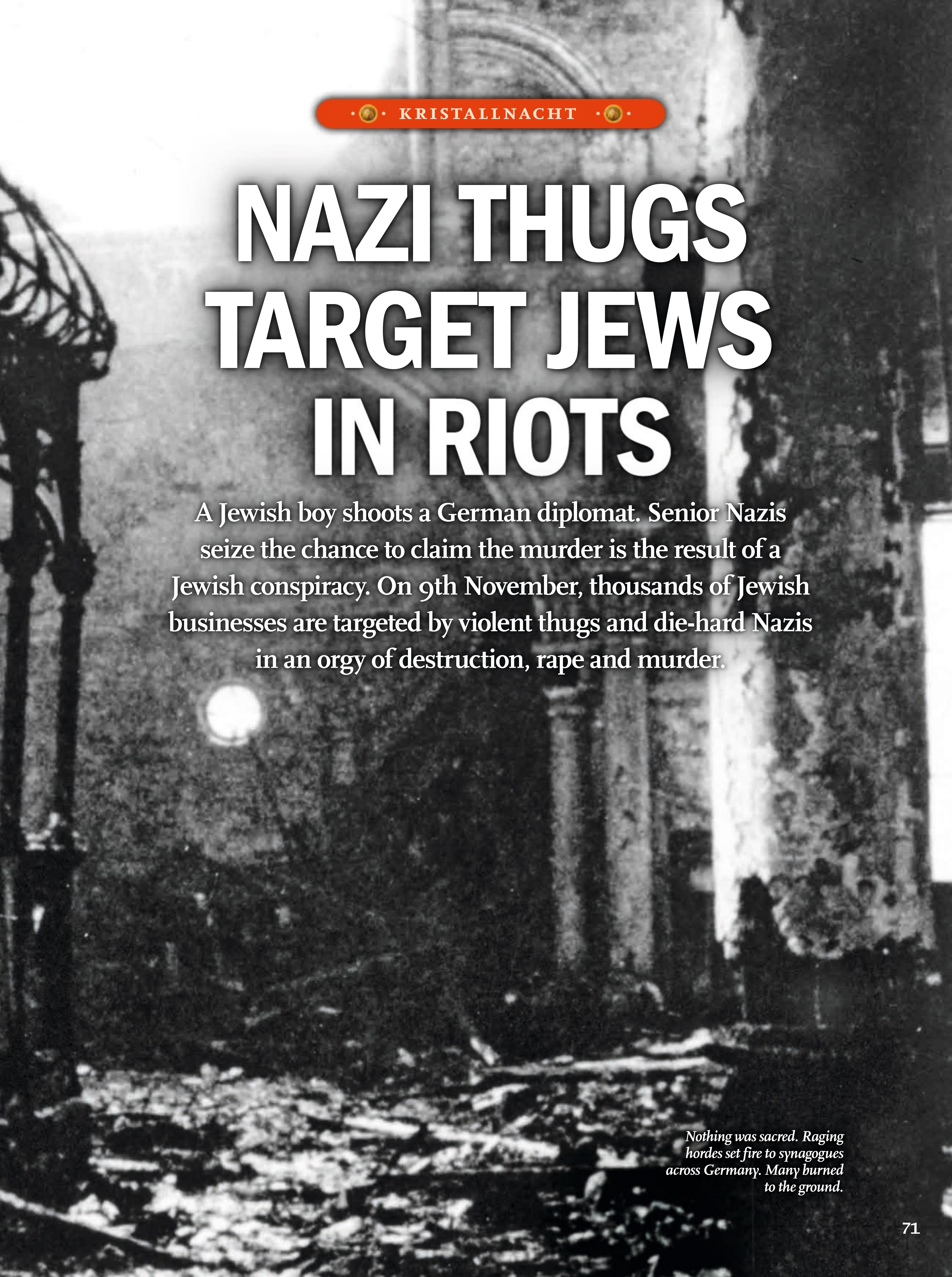
Germany's large armoured forces consisted mainly of small and lightly armed tanks.



1938 NOVEMBER

NAZI THUGS TARGET JEWS IN RIOTS

A Jewish boy shoots a German diplomat. Senior Nazis seize the chance to claim the murder is the result of a Jewish conspiracy. On 9th November, thousands of Jewish businesses are targeted by violent thugs and die-hard Nazis in an orgy of destruction, rape and murder.



Nothing was sacred. Raging hordes set fire to synagogues across Germany. Many burned to the ground.

Germany, 1938

THE STAGE IS SET

Berlin
GERMANY
Munich

After seizing power in Germany in 1933, the Nazis begin a deliberate policy of driving Jews from the country. In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws are passed, depriving all Jews of their German citizenship. The laws also ban marriage and sexual relations between Jews and German nationals as well as any others with Aryan blood.

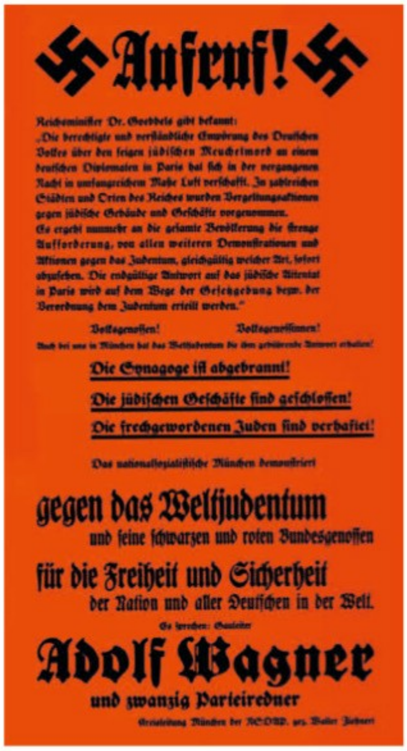
It was an autumn night in 1938 when German Jews felt the full force of the fact their rights had been stripped as a result of the Nuremberg Laws introduced in 1935. The passage here reproduces the dramatic events step-by-step of those people who experienced the brutal violence dished out by Nazi thugs who ran amok across all of Germany.

Paris

09.30, 7th November

The weather is exceptionally mild for the time of year – around 18 degrees Celsius. 17-year-old Herschel Grynszpan sweats in his khaki raincoat as he runs up the stairs from the Solférino station on the Paris Metro that morning. He briefly pauses in the bright daylight to get his bearings before purposefully setting off towards Rue de Lille, which runs parallel to the south bank of the Seine.

Grynszpan is Jewish and desperate. His thoughts are with his parents, who a few weeks ago were forced to move away from their home in Hanover, Germany to an area near the Polish border. Like 12,000 other Jews, his mother, father and two siblings have been expelled from Germany. It hasn't yet been possible to obtain entry visas for Poland, the country of his parents' birth.



Aufruf!

Reichsminiſter Dr. Goebbels gibt bekannt:
„Die berechtigte und verſtändliche Empörung des Deutſchen Volkes über den feigen jüdiſchen Meuchelmord an einem deutſchen Diplomaten in Paris hat ſich in der vergangenen Nacht in umfangreichem Maße Luft verſchafft. In zahlreichen Städten und Orten des Reiches wurden Vergeltungsaktionen gegen jüdiſche Gebäude und Geſchäfte vorgenommen.
Es ergeht nunmehr an die geſamte Bevölkerung die ſtrenge Aufforderung, von allen weiteren Demonſtrationen und Aktionen gegen das Judentum, gleichgültig welcher Art, ſofort abzuſehen. Die endgültige Antwort auf das jüdiſche Attentat in Paris wird auf dem Wege der Geſetzgebung bzw. der Verordnung dem Judentum erteilt werden."

Volksgenoſſen! Volksgenoſſinnen!

Die Synagoge iſt abgebrannt!
Die jüdiſchen Geſchäfte ſind geſchloſſen!
Die frechgewordenen Juden ſind verhaftet!

Das nationalſozialiſtiſche München demonſtriert
gegen das Weltjudentum
und ſeine ſchwarzen und roten Bundesgenoſſen
für die Freiheit und Sicherheit
der Nation und aller Deutſchen in der Welt.

Adolf Wagner
und zwanzig Parteiredner

The day after the riots, Gauleiter Adolf Wagner stated that the actions were a "protest against world Jewry".

The young Herschel had moved on his own to the French capital because he couldn't find work in Germany as a Jew. He knows about his family's fate courtesy of a postcard received four days earlier from his sister Berta, who revealed the family were sleeping on straw sacks and were poorly fed. The postcard felt like it was burning a hole in the wallet in his pocket, and the thought of his family's unhappy fate sends another wave of anger, sorrow and vengeance through him.

Although the clock shows only 09.30 in the morning, most of the tables at the pavement cafes are already occupied, but few notice the dark-haired and frail Grynszpan. He fights his way through the crowds at a brisk pace, occasionally sticking a hand into his inside pocket to make sure his recently purchased revolver is still in place. A few minutes later he spots the German swastika flag flying over a monstrous four-storey building at 78, Rue de Lille. Here stands the German embassy, but Herschel can't find the entrance. He turns to a police officer outside and is directed to a doorman who asked his business.

"I would like to see a person of some importance, who is au courant with German secrets. I have an important document to deliver," Herschel replies in French. The concierge leads the young man up the stairs to the second floor, where he is greeted by a German receptionist. Herschel – this time in German – repeats his claim that he has an important document that he wishes to hand to the ambassador personally. But the ambassador isn't present, so Herschel is instead directed to third secretary Ernst vom Rath, who is sat behind his desk in a small office. 29-year-old vom Rath is opening the day's post and asks Herschel to take a seat in a leather chair opposite before asking to see the documents.

Grynszpan fishes a gun from his pocket.

"You are a *sales boche* (filthy kraut) and here, in the name of 12,000 persecuted Jews, is your document!" He screams.

Vom Rath half-rises from his chair, but slumps over the desk as a bullet drills into his stomach. The young Jew fires off another four shots from close range, but only one hits vom Rath. He struggled to his feet, yelling for help while clutching his stomach with both hands as blood seeps through his clothes.

The receptionist rushes to vom Rath's office, alerted by the shots. He finds vom Rath in the doorway. Behind him the young Jew stands with the gun in his hand, now strangely calm.

The badly wounded vom Rath is rushed to hospital, while Grynszpan is overpowered and handcuffed. "It's a pity he's not dead," he mumbles as several police officers lead him out of the embassy. He is led away calmly, except for one moment when he yells "filthy krauts" again at the Germans. Later, he explains his actions to the police: "I've just shot a man in his office. I do not regret it. I did it to avenge my parents, who are living in misery in Germany." Adding, "From the moment I read my sister's postcard... I decided to kill a member of the embassy".

Paris & Germany

Early morning, 8th November

The next day, all hell breaks loose: vom Rath is still fighting for his life, but in Germany the morning newspapers condemn the entire Jewish population as murderers, plotting to take on the Nazis in bloody fashion. Editors take the opportunity to list previous attacks and remind their readers that it was only a few years ago that a Jew shot and killed Wilhelm Gustloff, head of the Nazi organisation for German citizens in Switzerland.

As Tuesday progresses, spontaneous reprisals and demonstrations break out around Germany. In Bad Hersfeld in the State of Hesse, a synagogue is burned down, and in many other towns and cities, furious Germans throw stones through Jewish shop windows and painted shop fronts with hateful comments: *"Raus mit den Juden"* (Out with the Jews).

Jews believe that the five fingers on the palm-shaped "Hamsa" amulet represents the five books of the Torah.

Immediately after the attack, Adolf Hitler sends two of his best doctors, Karl Brandt and Georg Magnus, to Paris, so they can examine the wounded diplomat. On the morning of 8th November, the doctors issue a statement describing their patient's health:

"The condition of Counsellor vom Rath is regarded as serious in view of the wound in the stomach. Considerable loss of blood due to the lacerations of the patient's spleen has been treated with transfusions. The excellent surgical and medical treatment given by Professor Baumgartner of Paris allows us to hope for an improvement."

PARIS

16.25, 9th November

The following morning – Wednesday, 9th November – doctors are no longer optimistic about the situation. Vom Rath's condition has deteriorated, and by the afternoon he slips into a coma. The doctors can only watch helplessly as the life ebbs out of the young diplomat, and at 16.25 he is declared dead.

Following an frustrated moment of anger, Herschel Grynszpan is now a murderer. In a matter of hours, the repercussions from his crime will become a crucial cog in the Nazi propaganda machine.

MUNICH

20.45, 9th November

Hitler and other senior Nazi leaders are in Munich to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Munich Putsch, an unsuccessful attempt to foment revolution in November 1923.

News of vom Rath's death reaches the Führer a little before 21.00 that evening as he sits down for a celebratory dinner in Munich's town hall with the party's old faithful.

After an adjutant hands him the message of vom Rath's death, the dictator pushes his plate away before turning to propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, sitting at his side. For a few minutes the men engage in an intense whispered conversation, with Goebbels informing Hitler that spontaneous anti-Jewish riots have already broken out around Germany. Hitler orders that the demonstrations be allowed to continue, and that the police should stand down.

"The SA should be allowed to have a fling," says Hitler flippantly. He then leaves the meeting without delivering the traditional closing speech. Instead, Goebbels rises to address the assembly. Waving a piece of paper, he addresses the room:

"I have news here for you tonight, to demonstrate what happens to a good German when he relaxes his vigil for one moment. Ernst vom Rath was a good German, a loyal servant of the Reich, working for the good of our people in our embassy in Paris. Shall I tell you what happened to him? He was shot down! ... He is now dead."

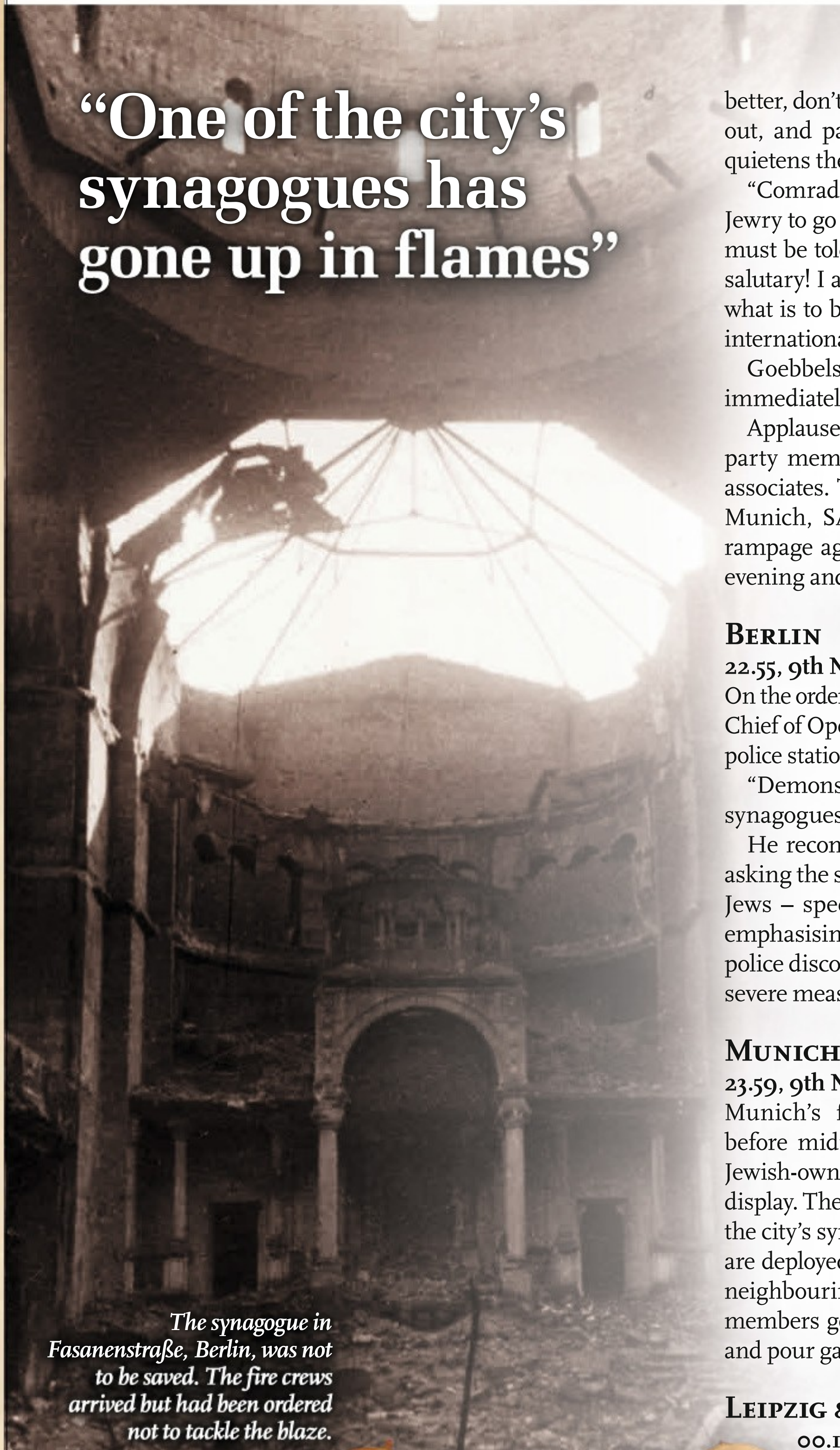
Goebbels pauses to allow the news to sink before he strikes the table with his fist and raises his voice:

"Do I need to tell you the race of the dirty swine who perpetrated this foul deed? A Jew! Tonight he lies in jail in Paris, claiming that he acted on his own, that he had no instigators of this awful deed behind him. But we know

Deutsche kauft nicht beim Juden

Nazis called on Germans to boycott Jewish goods. This banner was hung near the synagogue near Fasanenstraße, Berlin.

“One of the city’s synagogues has gone up in flames”



The synagogue in Fasanenstraße, Berlin, was not to be saved. The fire crews arrived but had been ordered not to tackle the blaze.

better, don’t we?” Throughout the town hall, an uproar breaks out, and party members scream for vengeance. Goebbels quietens the rabble before continuing:

“Comrades, we cannot allow this attack by international Jewry to go unchallenged. It must be repudiated. Our people must be told, and their answer must be ruthless, forthright, salutary! I ask you to listen to me, and together we must plan what is to be our answer to Jewish murder and the threat of international Jewry to our glorious German Reich!”

Goebbels concludes his tirade by urging the veterans to immediately take “spontaneous” action.

Applause breaks out in the hall and within moments the party members swarm out of the hall to call on their SA associates. Telephone lines hum across Germany, and from Munich, SA leaders instruct their members to go on the rampage against Jewish homes, shops and synagogues that evening and overnight.

BERLIN

22.55, 9th November

On the orders of Gestapo and SiPo Director Reinhard Heydrich, Chief of Operations Heinrich Müller telegram all the country's police stations:

“Demonstrations against the Jews, and particularly their synagogues, will take place very shortly.”

He recommends the police avoid intervening, while also asking the security forces to prepare to arrest 20,000-30,000 Jews – specifically “well-to-do Jews”. Müller concludes by emphasising that detailed instructions will follow and that if police discover Jews in possession of weapons then “the most severe measures are to be applied”.

MUNICH

23.59, 9th November

Munich’s fire station receives its first alarm call just before midnight. Rioters have smashed the windows in a Jewish-owned textile store in Augustenstraße and set fire to its display. The second call follows just three minutes later: one of the city’s synagogues has gone up in flames. Five fire engines are deployed to try and put out the fire before it spread to the neighbouring Jewish school, but when the paramilitary SA members get wind of their attempts, they cut off their hoses and pour gasoline on to the fire.

LEIPZIG & LESUM

00.15, 10th November

The persecution of Jews is now in full swing. Thursday is not many minutes old before vengeful crowds in Munich and over a thousand German towns, villages and cities rampage through the night. In Leipzig, 160 kilometres south-west of Berlin, Nazis begin smashing up and looting Jewish-owned shops, and a 25-year-old night owl, Dutchman Wim van Leer, looks on in horror as 20 men suddenly leap out of a truck and begin ringing doorbells in a Jewish neighbourhood. The men force their way into people’s homes and shortly after the windows on a third-floor balcony are flung open. A man pokes his head out to yell “all blessings coming from above”. Shortly

Torah scrolls – the sacred Hebrew texts – were thrown out onto the streets in front of synagogues and burned.

NAME **HERSCHEL GRYNSZPAN**

TITLE REFUGEE

1921-1943

Assassin's fate remains unknown

Herschel Grynszpan was born in Hanover, Germany, the son of Polish Jews. In 1935, Herschel left school as a result of Nazi persecution. He tried to emigrate to Palestine, but instead ended up in Paris, where he lived as an illegal refugee.

- **Disappeared in prison.**
- **Family survived the Holocaust.**

NAME **ERNST VOM RATH**

TITLE GERMAN DIPLOMAT IN PARIS

1909-1938

Rath was randomly targeted

Ernst vom Rath was born in Frankfurt am Main, son of a senior official. In 1932, he joined the Nazi Party and began his career as a diplomat. After a stint in Bucharest he was posted to the German embassy in Paris, where he apparently became a random victim for Grynszpan's anger.

- **Lawyer and diplomat.**
- **Nazi since 1932.**

after, a piano is pushed through the window, crashing to the ground with a deafening blow. Furniture and ceramics follow and when the stormtroopers have finished, they catch an 18-year-old and shove him out from the third floor. He breaks both legs and is burned and cut when he lands in a pile of shattered glass, broken furniture and burning beds.

At an educational farm far out in the country, around 60 kilometres north of Leipzig, the winter night's silence is interrupted by the noise of several trucks entering the courtyard. Excited SS and SA men leap from the vehicles and stormed into the dormitory, where a group of Jewish teenagers are sleeping. The men flick on the lights, order the frightened children outside and shoot one of the boys. Before leaving, the men slash the farm's sacred scriptures, the Torah scroll, destroy the children's clothing and belongings, and set fire to their prayer books.

In Lesum near Bremen, two Jews – Herr and Frau Goldberg – are shot shortly after midnight as they sleep in their beds. The perpetrators are SA members. Their company leaders had ordered them to eradicate the few Jews living in the village. "Destroy them!" was Truppführer Seggermann's explicit order. "By tonight there must be no Jews left in Germany."

15,000 Polish Jews, including Herschel Grynszpan's family, were expelled from Germany on 27th October, 1938. Grynszpan's family fled on through Poland to the Soviet Union.

Berlin & Aschaffenburg

01.02, 10th November

Gestapo chief Heydrich clarifies the orders for the country's police stations:

"Only such measures are to be taken that will not endanger German lives or property... non-Jewish businesses are to be protected from damage under all circumstances," he writes.

In the same message, Heydrich also emphasises "the police are to seize all archives from all synagogues and offices of Jewish community organizations". He also adds: "As soon as the events of this night make it feasible for the officials concerned, they are to arrest as many Jews – especially wealthy ones – in all districts as can be accommodated in existing cells... After the arrests have been carried out, concentration camps in the region are to be contacted immediately, to make arrangements for the transfer of the Jews to the camps as quickly as possible."

In many places, local Nazis misinterpret the order from above as an instruction to kill Jews immediately. In the middle of the night, two men break into a house in the town of Aschaffenburg south of Frankfurt and shoot its owner, Ludwig Löwenthal, as he lies asleep in his bed. As the family huddle together in fear, his brother-in-law, Alfons Vogel, is kidnapped, taken to the nearby woods, tied to a tree and used as target practice and killed.

Berlin

02:00, 10th November

Two hours after midnight, the riots spread to the German capital. Police patrols set up roadblocks to divert traffic around the areas where the stormtroopers are expected to be most active. Once the barriers are in place, police signal the perpetrators to take the stage. They are joined by flocks of pub drunks who see a unique opportunity to commit acts of violence and vandalism without any consequences.

Düsseldorf & Cologne

04.00, 10th November

A gang of SA men smash their way into the Jewish hospital in Düsseldorf with iron bars and clubs. Despite loud protests from the staff, the Nazis order all the patients out of their beds. After a heated argument, only those patients recently operated on are allowed to remain, with the rest banished to the street.

In Cologne, the riots are systemic. Over police radio, the local SA are ordered to follow a strict timetable: at 04.00 the city's synagogues and Jewish chapels are to be set alight, then at 06.00 the plan will extend to include Jewish shops and homes in the city centre. At 08.00, once it is light, the mob will move out into the city's outskirts to continue their work. The police are also instructed to supply both SA troops and hangers-on with axes, housebreaking tools and ladders – plus the names and address of Jews being targeted.

The operation – however well-organised – doesn't go to plan: in the smoking city centre, hundreds of Nazis turn on each other when disagreements break out how to divide up the loot from the shops they've plundered.

As in most places, Cologne's ordinary citizens either look on disapprovingly or passively as the stormtroopers and other troublemakers – including children and members of the Hitler Youth – run riot. Only a handful dare attempt to interfere. Those who do, fare badly. In Cologne, one woman is beaten up when she tries to stop a gang of vandals, while a police officer is immediately suspended for preventing a shop from being looted. Others are, however, more successful in helping their Jewish neighbours. One such example is Georg Roth, a senior Nazi official in the town of Eichstätt. At 05.00 he learns the SA is planning to purge the city of Jews, a plan he strongly opposes. When a crowd of 20 men attempt to break into a Jewish house, he convinces the police to intervene and chase off the perpetrators. Recognising the house's residents are still in danger, Roth is forced to hire a taxi to drive them to safety, placing them in the care of family near Augsburg, 100 kilometres away.

63 percent of German Nazis expressed indignation against persecution in 1938 according to interviews conducted by psychologist Müller-Claudius following the Kristallnacht.

Baden-Baden

07.00, 10th November

In most places, the destruction and manhunts peaks during the small hours. But in Baden-Baden, a spa town with lots of foreign visitors, the local authorities decide to delay the pogrom until morning – to avoid disturbing the tourists' sleep. It isn't until 07.00 that the Nazis began to gather in the town's streets, and again with one eye on the tourists they avoid targeting Jewish shops and homes. Instead, they rounded up all Jewish men and lead them directly to the town's synagogue.

Here they are forced to sing *Horst-Wessel-Lied* (Horst Wessel Song), a Nazi anthem. Afterwards the men read aloud from Hitler's *Mein Kampf* – if they read too quietly, they are beaten and kicked. Before the Jews are taken out of the synagogue they are ordered to urinate against the walls. The synagogue is set alight and the men shipped off to the railway station to be put on a train to the concentration camp at Dachau.

The Jews in Baden-Baden are as surprised as they are shocked as they recognise many of the Nazi terrorists. Their number includes neighbours, colleagues, business associates and customers. Charlotte Singer, wife of a doctor in a town called Neisse (now Nysa in Poland), south-east of Berlin, is attacked by people she knew. She is home alone and is woken early on Thursday morning by a man who invaded her bedroom with an axe. The man, Erich Brückner, is one of her husband's patients and the son of a plumber who'd done a lot of work for the Singer family. Seemingly oblivious to her presence he begins to smash her furniture to pieces, after which he pours ink on the carpet. "To set fire to this place would be best!" he yells, leaving the bedroom and proceeding to wreck the rest of the house.

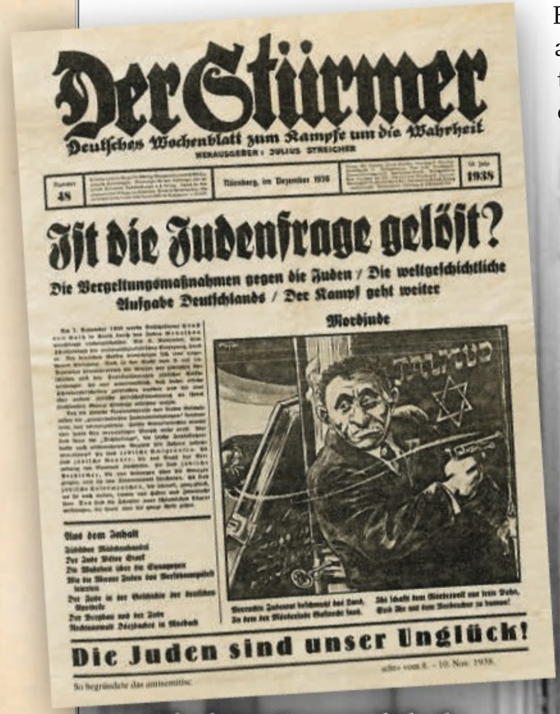
Not long after, as she sweeps up the broken glass, Singer is again visited by an angry mob of Germans, this time a group of women. Several she already knows, but they fake ignorance and instead seek out the kitchen, the only room left intact. The air is filled with flying pots, pans, crockery and glass, as the women squeal in delight. Shaking and weeping, Singer is nonetheless relieved when the women leave the house without torching it.

Berlin

Dawn, 10th November

By sunrise, 12 of the capital's synagogues are in flames. In front of the largest, the synagogue in Fasanenstraße, a Jew begs the fire department to tackle the blaze.

The firefighters regard the inferno but refuse to open their hoses on account of orders: "We've come to protect the building next door," one said. Elsewhere in Berlin, at the synagogue in the Prinzregentenstraße, the caretaker and his family are reported as having died in the flames. Just around the corner, raging mobs armed with clubs and iron bars, chase two Jews up to the second floor of a residential property. Terrified, the two men try to escape their pursuers by quickly



Der Stürmer

Deutſches Wochenblatt zum Kampfe um die Wahrheit

Herausgeber: Julius Streicher

Nummer 48

Nürnberg, im Dezember 1938

1938

Iſt die Judenfrage gelöſt?

Die Vergeltungsmaßnahmen gegen die Juden / Die weltgeſchichtliche Aufgabe Deutſchlands / Der Kampf geht weiter

Mordjude

Aus dem Inhalt

Die Juden sind unser Unglück!

The destruction wrought by the Kristallnacht was used as proof of how the Jews were Germany's "misfortune".

Thousands of Jewish-owned shop windows were smashed. The Nazis baptised the event "die Kristallnacht".

jumping out of the window but are mortally wounded when they hit the pavement below.

Meanwhile, in Dahlem – one of the city's wealthier districts – Jewish residents are visited by vengeful Nazis where they carry out further contemptible acts of violence. Expensive sofas are smashed, valuable paintings ripped, and the men arrested. In at least 15 cases, their wives and daughters are forced into bedrooms and raped.

Berlin

14.00, 10th November

In the Israel department store, the city's equivalent of London's Harrods, its Jewish owner Wilfrid Israel is convinced rioters will spare his business. He'd cultivated good connections high up in the police, and when the store's iron shutters are raised and the doors opened for business, several officers keep a watchful eye on the store's entrances.

But then, at 14.00 on Thursday afternoon, the officers mysteriously vanish and leave the scene to a horde of young men and uniformed SS men who force their way into the department store. The SS arrest the Jewish staff, while the mob pull shelves from the walls while trampling clothes, jewellery and other items.

Methodically, they work through one floor after another, destroying everything in their wake. Typewriters are thrown out of windows, furniture shoved down the store's main stairwell and the store's entire stock is reduced to little more than refuse and tinder. When the rioters have finished, the store looks like a bomb has hit it.

Across Germany

17.00, 10th November

The riots are starting to run out of steam. The levels of destruction start to drop, and propaganda minister Goebbels issues an order to halt the "demonstrations", a message he reads out on the radio.

After this, police start to direct the exhausted protestors home. Even now, however, several synagogues are in flames, while alleys and streets are filled with bonfires and broken glass as smashed furniture and other possessions are littered everywhere. Here and there shocked Jews are trying to save their possessions, as across the country silent columns of Jewish men are hoarded into railway cars bound for Dachau, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen.

In a statement to the international press, Joseph Goebbels claimed the riots were "the justified and understandable indignation of the German people at the cowardly assassination of a German diplomat." He even claimed, "No Jew had a hair of his head touched," and that "thanks to the outstanding discipline of the German people, only a few windows were broken in the riots".

Goebbels was forced to admit, however, that some looting might have taken place: "In a few isolated cases, perhaps, old women made off with small trinkets... to be used as Christmas presents." He went on to give the terrible night's events the relatively harmless name of *die Kristallnacht* (the Crystal Night, or Night of Broken Glass).

In his diary, the propaganda minister wrote:

"Our darling Jews will think twice in future before simply gunning down German diplomats."

300 synagogues were burned

In one night, over 300 synagogues were burned. The day after, bits of glass and furniture from thousands of stores littered the cities' streets.

GERMANY After the Kristallnacht, Jews were forced to pay to clean up the glass from the streets and clear the smoking ruins where synagogues had once stood. The German government confiscated all insurance pay-outs to any Jew and fined the Jewish community a total of one billion Reichsmarks. The destruction was estimated at approximately:

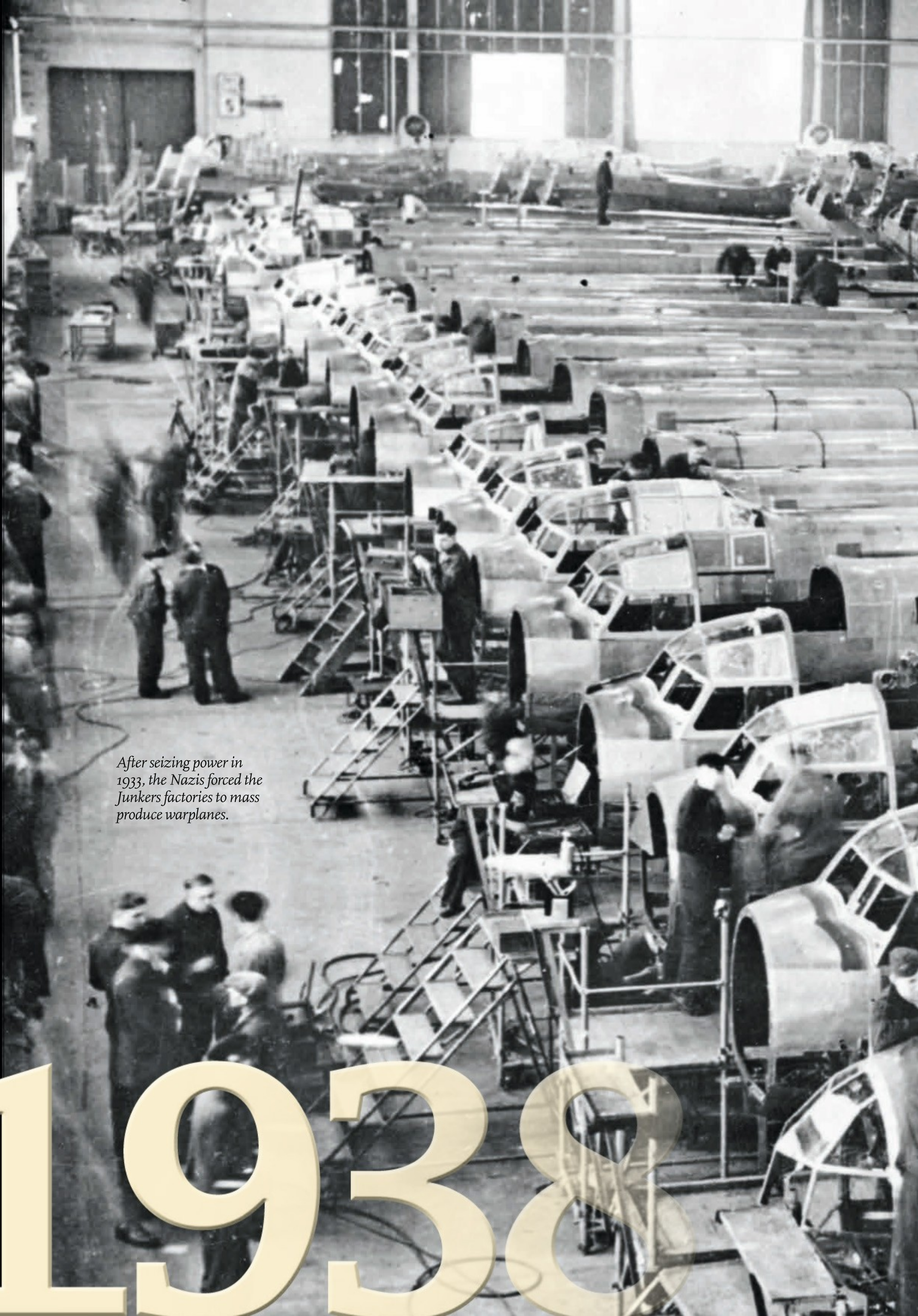
✡ 7,500	Jewish-owned shops and homes were destroyed.
✡ 267	synagogues were burned – many of them to the ground.
✡ 91	Jews were murdered, plus an unknown number committed suicide.
✡ 30,000	(approximately) Jewish men between 18 and 60 were sent to KZ camps.

AUSTRIA Damage in Vienna was immense. It had been absorbed into Germany with the rest of the country in March 1938 by the so-called "Anschluss". Statistics reveal that around

✡ 500	Jewish-owned stores were destroyed.
✡ 20	of the city's 21 synagogues were burned to the ground.
✡ 8	(at least) Jews were beaten to death.
✡ 21	Jews committed suicide – including disabled Professor Philip Freud, a relative of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud. After being beaten in his bed by the Nazis, Freud chose to take his own life.

AFTERMATH The only Nazis convicted for the Kristallnacht's excesses were those men who'd raped Jewish women in violation of the country's race laws.

The synagogue in Landau was just one of a total of 267 synagogues that were set alight.



After seizing power in 1933, the Nazis forced the Junkers factories to mass produce warplanes.

1938

GERMANY TAKES THE LEAD IN PRE-WAR ARMS RACE

After World War I, Germany was prohibited from rearming. But that didn't concern Adolf Hitler in the slightest. The Nazi leader had barely gained power in 1933 before he began to mobilise factories, and very quickly began rolling out state-of-the-art weapons. Six years later, Germany had developed the world's strongest war machine.

Europe, 1938

As soon as Hitler assumes power in 1933, he embarks on his mission to transform Germany into a thoroughly militarised and strong country. Drawing on his experiences in World War I, the new dictator plans to create a powerful air force. He has a cunning ploy to bypass restrictions from the Treaty of Versailles.

At Berghof, Adolf Hitler's private residence in Bavaria, the view from the specially installed panorama window in the Great Hall was like a postcard: green grass and blueish mountain peaks stretched as far as the eye could see. The beautiful view matched the dictator's mood that day. Hitler was relaxed as he met with 50 top-ranking officers in the high-ceilinged room on 22nd August, 1939. The time had come for war, and he said the prospects were good. France and Britian were militarily weak, while Germany was ready. "When starting and waging a war," Hitler announced, "it is not right that matters, but victory... The stronger man is right."

The officers were accustomed to Hitler's bombastic style, but this time the dictator had reason to be exremely confident. Germany was the strongest state in Europe. Since coming to power six years earlier, he'd rearmed intensively. Modernisations, investments and focused training had fine-tuned the German Wehrmacht's commanders and men. As the summer of 1939 drew to a close, Hitler made it known he had the world's most modern war machine, and the other European powers looked on tentatively.

Germany's superiority was paradoxical. 20 years earlier, World War I had left the defeated country impoverished and humiliated. Determined that the so-called "Great War" would be the last major conflict, the victorious powers behind the peace settlement imposed stringent demands for Germany to disarm. The size of both her army and navy were limited. Never again would a militarised Germany threaten the peace of Europe.

Hitler dismissed the treaty

Hitler was of a different opinion. He had already denounced the Treaty of Versailles in *Mein Kampf* in 1924. "The Versailles Treaty is worthless. 60 million German hearts and minds are on fire with anger and shame. They will cry out, 'We want war!'" Neither did Hitler bother to conceal that under his leadership Germany did not intend to respect the borders of her neighbours for long: "It will be the duty of German foreign

Tank drivers competed to break through walls, here at a so-called "Panzer Sport Fest" at Wünsdorf in 1936.

NAME **THE GÜNTER BROTHERS**

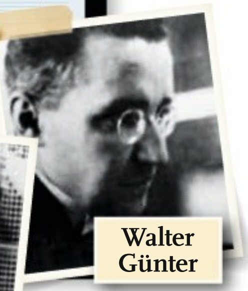
TITLE AIRCRAFT DESIGNERS

Born in 1899

Twin brothers lifted the Luftwaffe

As 10-year-olds, twin brothers Siegfried and Walter Günter heard about the French pioneer Louis Blériot's flight over the English Channel. The event sparked a lifelong interest in aircraft, and as designers, Siegfried and Walter created new aircraft types with aerodynamic hulls and elliptical wings. The planes had exactly the features that the Luftwaffe demanded, and the twins' design played a major role in the many German successes in the air.

- **Walter died in 1937.**
- **Siegfried died in 1969.**


Walter Günter

Siegfried Günter

policy to get large spaces to feed and house the growing population of Germany. Destiny points us towards Russia," he stated in *Mein Kampf*.

When Hitler took power in 1933, his first move was to establish a strong air force. This choice was no coincidence. German aircraft technology had been at the head during World War I, both in terms of innovative technology and efficient production. Among the Germans' many advancements were aircraft structures made almost entirely from metal – other nations still primarily used timber into the 1940s. German aircraft also had cantilevered wings and forward-facing, synchronous guns.

The Treaty of Versailles was not an immediate obstacle to the development of the Luftwaffe, because it was filled with loopholes. For example, the Treaty did not prohibit German pilots from training abroad, nor did it apply to civil aviation. In fact, for several years during the democratically elected Weimar Republic, Germany had been sending young men to train as pilots in the Soviet Union. At the same time, gliding clubs – where young people could prepare for a career in the air force – grew in popularity across the whole of Germany.

For Hitler, these tentative measures weren't enough. In 1933 he instructed aircraft manufacturers to build 1,000 new planes. The factories were given strict orders to construct the aircraft in such a way that they could also be used for civil aviation to stay within the provisions of the Versailles Treaty. One of these new flying wonders was the Heinkel HE 111, launched in 1935.

PROTESTS WERE VAGUE

In addition to expanding the air force, Hitler also tripled the size of the army from the 100,000 men permitted by the Treaty of Versailles to 300,000. He also contravened it with the order to construct new tanks. In February 1935, Germany secretly formed its first armoured brigade, at which point Hitler believed his military buildup was so far advanced he could reveal his true intentions to the world.

In March 1935, he announced – at first discreetly via Göring to a British official and then publicly – that Germany possessed an air force of 2,500 aircraft, most of which were newly built and state-of-the-art. Hitler also claimed that he was planning to expand the army to over 550,000 men.

This blatant and public violation of the treaty that had formed the basis of peace and order in post-war Europe was allowed to go almost unchallenged. Apart from a few diplomatic objections, neither Britain nor France lifted a finger. On the contrary, the British came to the Germans' assistance in June 1935 – just three months after Hitler's announcement – by signing the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, which extended the scope for German expansion. The agreement gave Germany the opportunity to build a submarine force of equivalent size to the British and a surface fleet one third the size of the Royal Navy.

BRITAIN COULD NOT AFFORD WAR

Britain and France's lack of condemnation seems like a submissive stance to the Nazi regime's militarisation. But from the point of view of the two countries, the reaction – or lack of – was simply common sense. Both Britain and France were terrified at the thought of a new war. World War I had been hard on both countries, militarily, economically and in terms of lives lost.

Economically, Great Britain had been most hard-hit. German submarines had cost Britain 40 percent of its merchant fleet, and to finance the war, Britain had been forced to dispose of most of its foreign assets. The result was soaring import duties and an unemployment rate of nearly three million people at its peak in 1931, over 20 percent of the workforce.

This lack of money clearly showed in the country's military arsenal. The Royal Air Force was still made up of biplanes, a throwback to the previous war and hopelessly outmoded. The Royal Navy, pride of Britain and the lifeblood of the vast empire was not in much better shape. In the early 1930s, Britain possessed so few ships that the chiefs of staff were not sure that any of the country's many bases were properly equipped to withstand an attack. Britain's lack of a reckonable military force meant that the country had to turn a blind eye to the Germans behaviour and remain on good terms.

Although Germany continued to rearm at breakneck speed, the British still committed only extremely limited funds to their military budget. Even

FACTS

TREATMENT WAS HARSH

After World War I, the Allied victors imposed strict restrictions on Germany, especially in respect to its army.

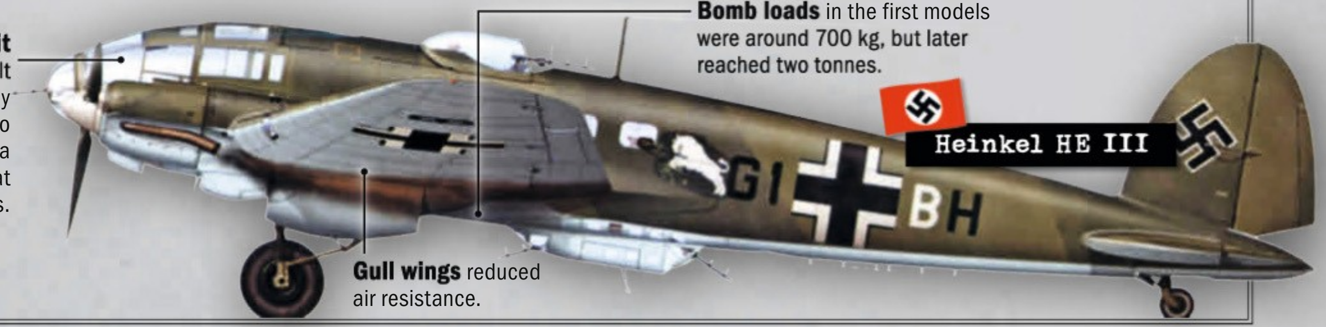
- **The number of soldiers could not exceed 100,000 and conscription was banned.**
- **Tanks and other assault weapons, naval vessels over 10,000 tonnes and submarines were prohibited.**
- **Areas of land, including the region of Alsace-Lorraine at the French border, were abandoned.**
- **German colonies were mandated under the League of Nations.**
- **The country had to pay significantly large war reparations.**

Hitler forced Europe to rearm

Poverty and crisis in the interwar period impacted military budgets, which were sharply cut in most countries. But Hitler's rearmament forced neighbouring countries to acquire new weaponry, and a number of new innovations were launched in the 1930s.

Air support determined the success of the army

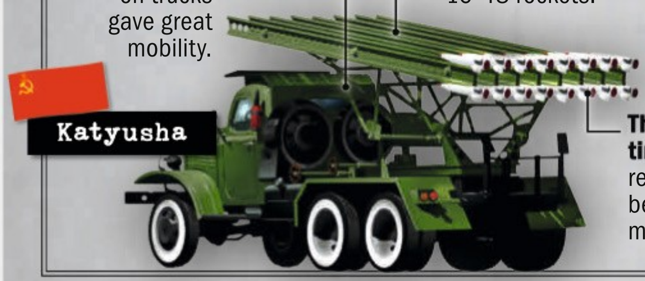
Superiority in the air was absolutely crucial for success on land. The lessons had been learnt before World War II, and both sides made great efforts to develop the best and fastest aircraft. One of the most effective was the German Heinkel HE 111, described as a wolf in sheep's clothing: the machine was made to look like a transport aircraft to sidestep the Treaty of Versailles, which banned the Germans from having warplanes, but it was actually a **bomber**. The HE 111 spread terror on all fronts in Europe during the war. Although its manoeuvrability was not impressive, the plane's **solid hull** could absorb considerable damage.



The cockpit was built completely from glass to give pilots a good view at all angles.

Bomb loads in the first models were around 700 kg, but later reached two tonnes.

Gull wings reduced air resistance.



The simple construction on trucks gave great mobility.

The launch array had a total launch capacity of 16-48 rockets.

The loading time was relatively long because of the many tubes.

Organ played death music

With the development of a new rocket launcher system, the Russians had an effective response to German tanks. Multiple **gun barrels** allowed the launcher to fire a number of rockets quickly. And thanks to its **simple design**, the weapon was quick and inexpensive to produce.

In Russian, the system was named Katyusha after a popular song about a girl who misses her soldier lover who is at the front. The Germans nicknamed it "Stalin's Organ".

Submarines were feared in the oceans

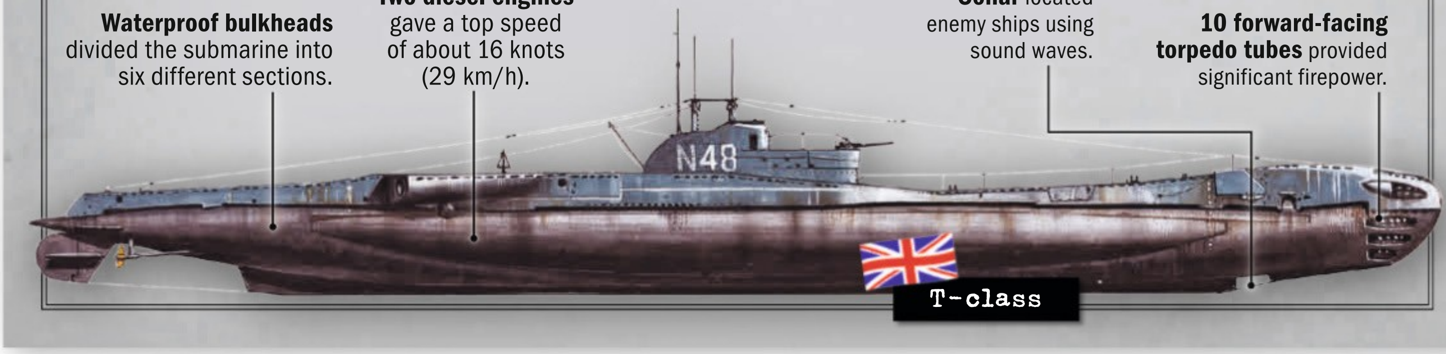
During the war, the British gradually succeeded in breaking the German dominance under the sea's surface, not least thanks to their T-class submarines. The vessels were equipped with **10 forward-facing torpedo tubes**, which made it difficult for opponents to evade. The T-class also had a modern **ASDIC sonar** system and was able to dive down to depths of around 90 metres. These submarines were given names beginning with T, with *HMS Triton*, launched in 1937, being the first.

Waterproof bulkheads divided the submarine into six different sections.

Two diesel engines gave a top speed of about 16 knots (29 km/h).

Sonar located enemy ships using sound waves.

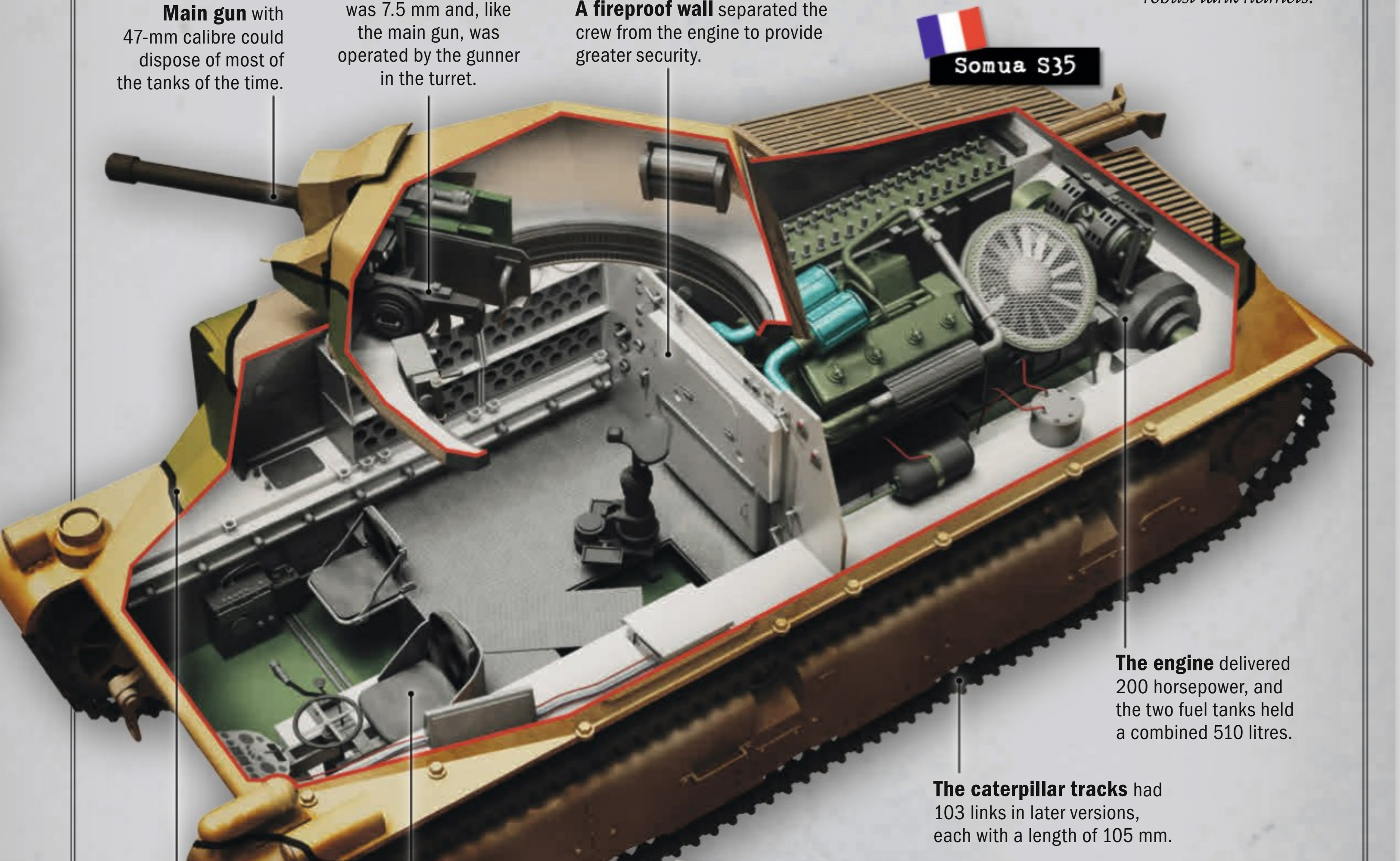
10 forward-facing torpedo tubes provided significant firepower.



Tanks became effective killing machines

During World War I, **tanks** were slow and clumsy debutants on the battlefield, but during the interwar period, the combat vehicles evolved with faster top speeds, better armour and more powerful guns. At the same time, they became more reliable – in particular the caterpillar tracks, which had been a weak point. The manoeuvrable Somua S35 played an important role for the French during the German invasion of 1940, although many vehicles were allocated to infantry divisions and weren't used effectively as armoured units.

There were around 430 Somua S35 tanks, and their crews typically wore robust tank helmets.



Main gun with 47-mm calibre could dispose of most of the tanks of the time.

The machine gun was 7.5 mm and, like the main gun, was operated by the gunner in the turret.

A fireproof wall separated the crew from the engine to provide greater security.

The engine delivered 200 horsepower, and the two fuel tanks held a combined 510 litres.

The caterpillar tracks had 103 links in later versions, each with a length of 105 mm.

Sloping armour all the way around caused enemy shells to bounce off.

The crew consisted of three men: a driver, a commander/gunner and a radio operator.

The Germans captured many French S35s and used them in their own army.

The so-called "Stalin's Organ" could easily be transported on trucks and became one of the most effective Soviet weapons. Here, in action in Hungary.

in 1938, the cost of defence accounted for only seven percent of Britain's GDP. The money was widely used to modernise the navy, which was most important in terms of guarding Britain's global empire. In addition to new battleships and a series of aircraft carriers, the British also acquired new submarines. The T-class submarines were so large that they could independently patrol the globe and protect important Asian territories like India, Singapore and Hong Kong. Britain's own defences were in the hands of an obsolete air force and a hard-pressed fleet.

French hid behind a fortified wall

The French regarded the Germans' rearming with concern, but without surprise. France had good reason to fear a repetition of the Great War. The overwhelming majority of the war had been on French or Belgian soil, and the French had paid a high price. The country had lost between 1.4-1.7 million young men from a population of around 40 million.

Both military and civilian leaders agreed: future fighting on French soil had to be prevented, almost at any cost. The French therefore literally chose to close off the country from Germany with a physical line of defence. Work on the defensive line, named the Maginot Line after its greatest advocate, Minister of War (and former war veteran) André Maginot, was started in 1930.

The Line was – almost symbolically – built on the remains of old trenches from Verdun. Along some sections, steep slopes formed a natural defence, but it was largely a complicated system of interconnected bunkers. Of these, 22 were underground fortifications, each with room for 1,000 men, while 36 were smaller forts. The Line was also supplied by electric railroad tracks that could bring weapons, equipment and supplies. Telephone cables were embedded into the cement, and the stores were protected by 17-tonne metal doors that closed automatically in the event of an explosion.

In the 1930s France started producing a range of tanks to guard the Maginot Line. Among the most advanced of these was the Somua S35, a manoeuvrable state-of-the-art cavalry tank. Only a few questioned the strategy, but some officers dared to express scepticism. Among them was Lieutenant Colonel Charles de Gaulle, a prominent advocate for army modernisation, who later was to become general and president. De Gaulle considered the idea of hiding behind a wall protected by tanks both dangerous and naive. Far better, the French should use the tanks to – collectively in small, fast units – seek out and face the enemy.

His words fell on deaf ears. The construction of the Maginot Line had cost seven billion francs, and the defence budget was virtually spent. At the same time, France's peaceful intentions were seen as a safeguard against attacks: "How can anyone believe that we are still thinking of an offensive, when we have spent billions on setting up a fortified barrier?" asked Minister of War, General Joseph Maurin.

> "This is not peace – it is an armistice for 20 years"
>
> Ferdinand Foch, French Marshal, on the Treaty of Versailles

Stalin destroyed his own defences

France and Britain's limited military strengthening meant that, in the autumn of 1939, only one country had enough weapons and soldiers to act as a counterweight to Hitler's war machine. From the early 1930s, the Soviet Union had rearmed steadily. Moscow didn't see Germany as a threat, however, but looked eastward to Japan, which in 1931 had invaded and occupied neighbouring Manchuria, a region in northern China in which the Soviet Union had strong interests. Fear of Japanese expansion had seen Stalin increase weapons production. In 1932, 4,000 tanks rolled out of the factories.

The Soviet Polikarpov I-16 aircraft was revolutionary, with landing wheels that could be pulled up when the machine was in the air. In the late 1930s, 'Stalin's organ', the Katyusha rocket launcher, was developed, but by the mid-1930s the Soviets were already ahead of their time in many aspects of weapons development.

In 1936, however, Stalin decided to remove all military commanders that he suspected of being rivals. These purges particularly affected the most talented and innovative officers, and afterwards the Red Army was left without the skills needed to understand, develop and use these new weapons. Hitler had free rein.

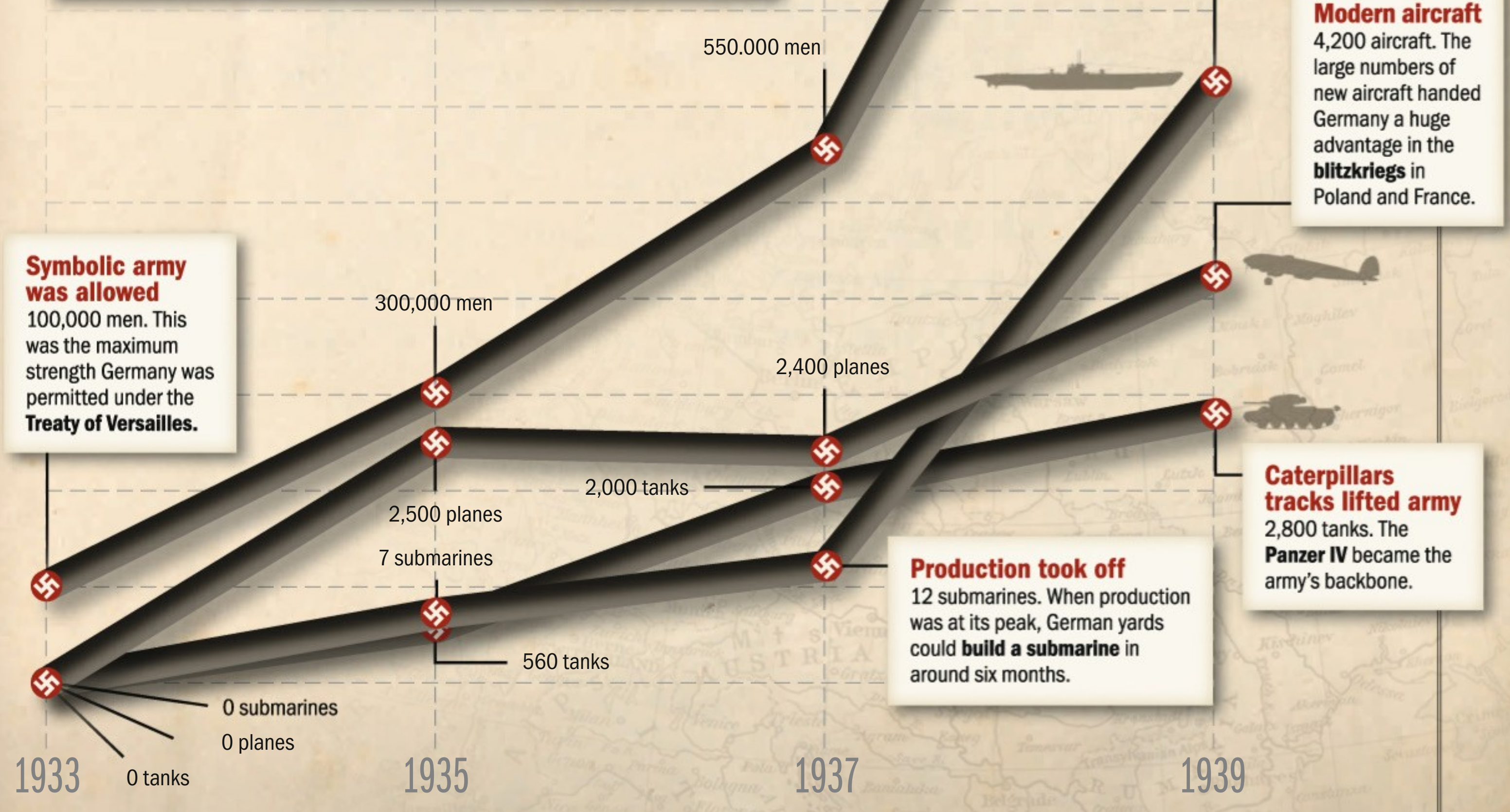
German weapons covered land, air and water

Initially, Hitler pretended that Germany remained within the Treaty of Versailles, but it soon became clear he had no intention of complying with any restrictions. Within a few years, German weapon production rocketed.

Businesses keenly participated

The German **Krupp factories** were forced to stop the production of weapons after World War I. But work resumed in earnest in 1933 as its owner seized the opportunity to deliver to an affluent customer.

Almost all German artillery and many tanks were produced by Krupp.



Symbolic army was allowed

100,000 men. This was the maximum strength Germany was permitted under the **Treaty of Versailles.**

Army numbered one million

1,300,000 men were **in uniform** at the outbreak of war, this was in addition to several paramilitary corps.

U-boats hunted in packs

62 submarines. Kriegsmarine commanders organised the U-boats into **wolfpacks**.

Modern aircraft

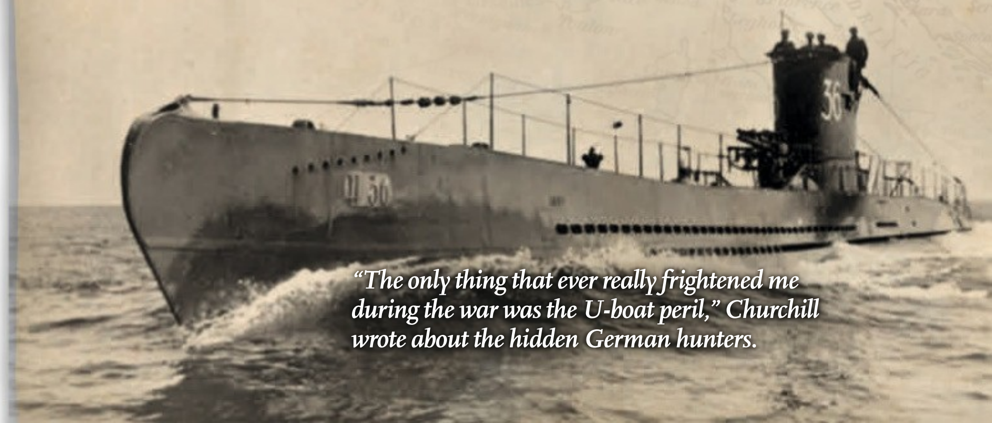
4,200 aircraft. The large numbers of new aircraft handed Germany a huge advantage in the **blitzkriegs** in Poland and France.

Caterpillars tracks lifted army

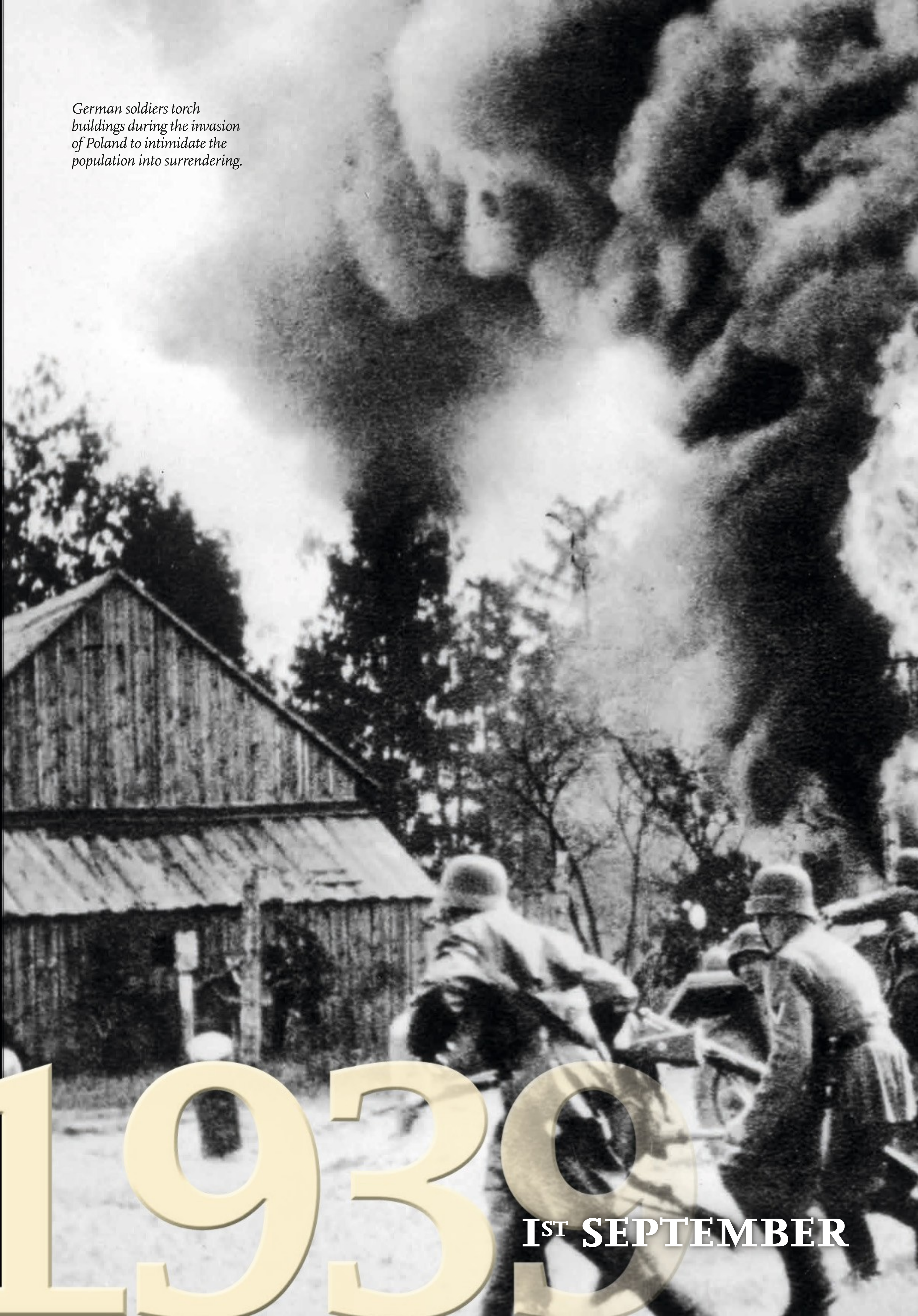
2,800 tanks. The **Panzer IV** became the army's backbone.

Production took off

12 submarines. When production was at its peak, German yards could **build a submarine** in around six months.



"The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril," Churchill wrote about the hidden German hunters.



German soldiers torch buildings during the invasion of Poland to intimidate the population into surrendering.

1939

1ST SEPTEMBER

GERMAN TROOPS ATTACK POLAND

Adolf Hitler is playing a high-stake game when he attacks Poland. The country must be subjugated quickly to prevent Western European powers – principally Britain and France – from interfering. But the campaign does not go entirely according to the Führer's plan.

Poland, 1939

THE STAGE IS SET

POLAND
Warsaw

Hitler aims to clear Eastern Europe for resettlement by Aryan Germans as part of his Lebensraum policy. He has taken Austria and Czechoslovakia without a fight; next up is Poland. But while Poland's army is outdated, the country has guarantees of support from France and Britain. Regardless, Hitler decides to take a chance...

Polish military cap from 1939. The Polish army was unprepared for war.

At dawn on 1st September, 1939, the German battleship *SMS Schleswig-Holstein* turned its giant guns towards Westerplatte peninsula on the Polish Baltic coast near the port city of Danzig (now Gdansk). At 04.48, the guns opened up and eight shells thundered towards the south-east corner of the city's garrison, leaving three large holes in its outside wall and setting its oil storage dumps ablaze.

A few minutes later, three elite divisions of German marines attacked, but despite only having 200 soldiers, the Polish forces put up a stubborn resistance. At 06.22, the marines radioed the battleship to report that they were retreating following heavy losses. Two-and-a-half hours later, the marines attacked again, this time reinforced with 60 soldiers from *SS-Heimwehr*. They forced their way through garrison's outer wall, but their progress was slowed by mines, overturned trees, barbed wire and gunfire. By midday, the demoralised SS soldiers fled, and the marines, whose captain was wounded, had also had enough. Fighting on the first day cost 82 Germans lives and the peninsula hadn't been taken.

The Germans finally overran the headland after a week of dogged fighting, thanks to the support of a torpedo boat and 60 aircraft, which dropped over 100 bombs. On 7th September at 09.45, the exhausted Polish defenders finally hoisted the white flag.

The Poles were stubbornly resisting despite the fact that the Germans were superior on paper. The invasion force consisted of two armies of 882,000 and 630,000 men. The first group attacked from the north, and the second from the west and south. The German army was modern and well-organised, while many of the Polish units were called up at the last minute.

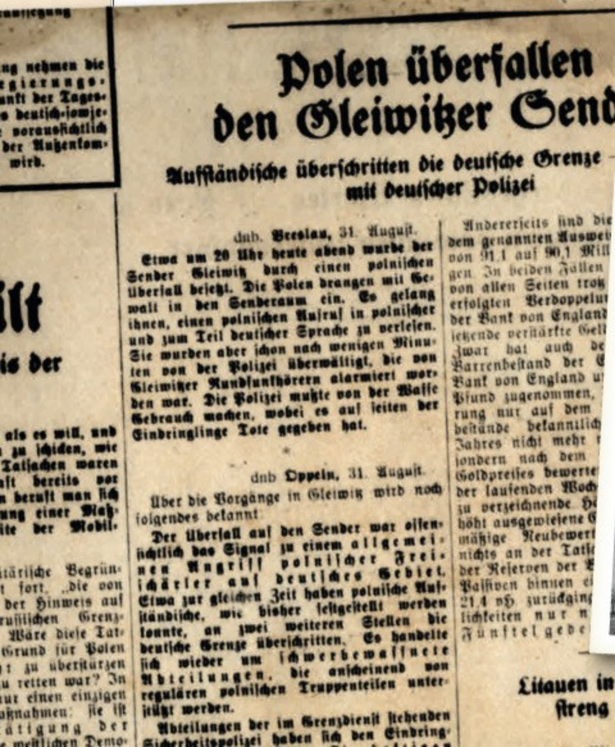
Hitler expected a quick victory, but the Poles' solid defence was potentially dangerous to the Führer's ambitions. The jokers in the pack were Britain and France – World War I's two major victors. If Hitler's army became bogged down in a protracted campaign in Poland, Germany's west flank would be left exposed. If Britain and France immediately went on the offensive, they could end the Nazi dictator's campaign before it began.

Western powers ruled by frightened men

Hitler had reason to believe that the two great powers would hesitate, however. At the Munich Conference in 1938, he'd insisted that Czechoslovakia cede the predominantly German-speaking Sudetenland to Germany, and both the French and British prime ministers – Édouard Daladier and Neville Chamberlain – had agreed to his demands. Their capitulation convinced Hitler that France and Britain were ruled by frightened men whom he could easily manipulate.

Hitler saw no reason to curtail his territorial plundering. In March 1939, he subjugated the rest of the Czech territory – Bohemia and Moravia – and converted the Slovak part of the former Czechoslovakia into a German puppet state with free passage for German troops. His aggressive manoeuvres were forming a noose around Poland, which was surrounded by German troops on three sides.

An invasion of Poland would allow the dictator to avenge the wrongs he believed to have been committed in World War I, in which Germany had been forced to



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Polen überfallen den Gleiwitzer Sender

Aufſtändiſche überſchritten die deutſche Grenze — Kämpfe mit deutſcher Polizei

dnb. **Breslau, 31. Auguſt.**

Etwa um 20 Uhr heute abend wurde der Sender Gleiwitz durch einen polniſchen Überfall beſetzt. Die Polen drangen mit Gewalt in den Senderaum ein. Es gelang ihnen, einen polniſchen Aufruf in polniſcher und zum Teil deutſcher Sprache zu verleſen. Sie wurden aber ſchon nach wenigen Minuten von der Polizei überwältigt, die von Gleiwitzer Rundfunkhörern alarmiert worden war. Die Polizei mußte von der Waffe Gebrauch machen, wobei es auf ſeiten der Eindringlinge Tote gegeben hat.

*

dnb **Oppeln, 31. Auguſt.**

Über die Vorgänge in Gleiwitz wird noch folgendes bekannt:

Der Überfall auf den Sender war offenſichtlich das Signal zu einem allgemeinen Angriff polniſcher Freiſchärler auf deutſches Gebiet. Etwa zur gleichen Zeit haben polniſche Aufſtändiſche, wie bisher feſtgeſtellt werden konnte, an zwei weiteren Stellen die deutſche Grenze überſchritten. Es handelte ſich wieder um ſchwerbewaffnete Abteilungen, die anſcheinend von regulären polniſchen Truppenteilen unterſtützt werden.

Abteilungen der im Grenzdienſt ſtehenden Sicherheitspolizei haben ſich den Eindring-

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Fünftel gebe

Litauen in jedem Fall ſtreng neutral

Kowno, 31. Auguſt.

The SS conducted a fake attack on the radio station at Gleiwitz to give Hitler a pretext to attack Poland.

The Gleiwitz radio station's high masts meant its broadcasts could be heard over most of Europe.

The battleship SMS Schleswig-Holstein had fought in World War I, but was still fully operational.

renounce lands to Poland, including the coal-rich region of Upper Silesia. The Treaty of Versailles had also seen the port city of Danzig become a free city administered by the People's Confederation (the forerunner of the UN). And worst of all from a German point of view, Poland had been granted the so-called Polish Corridor – an area of land area that gave Poland access to the Baltic Sea by separating Germany from East Prussia. Something that many Germans found to be deeply humiliating.

In addition to the desire to regain lands lost at the end of World War I, Nazi racial ideology dictated that Germany was entitled to Lebensraum – a colonial settlement of Eastern Europe, at the expense of what the Germans perceived to be a subhuman Slavic population.

During 1939, several signs of impending aggression emerged: on 22nd March, the Germans occupied the Lithuanian port of Memel (now Klaipeda), which until 1919 had been in German hands. Hitler also demanded that Danzig be reunited with Germany and that his government be granted rights to build transport links across the Polish Corridor.

GURANTEE INFURIATED HITLER

The diplomatic row between Germany and Poland forced Britain to intervene. On 31st March in the House of Commons, Chamberlain proclaimed that Britain would support Polish independence and Danzig's continued status as a free city. The British guarantee infuriated Hitler. At the same time, it became clear to the Führer that Polish leaders intended to cede few – if any – concessions to Germany in the corridor, let alone voluntarily join the pro-German bloc. The Nazi dictator became convinced that the Polish question would have to be solved by military means.

1.4 million

German soldiers invaded Poland, supported by 2,600 tanks and 2,000 aircraft. Against them stood just 700,000 Polish soldiers with 750 tanks and 900 aircraft.

By this point, Hitler had already ordered his generals to begin forming a detailed plan for an attack on Poland under the codename *Fall Weiss* (Operation White). However, several of his commanders were sceptical and believed that Hitler's scheme was too risky. Their fears were well founded. In May 1939, Poland's Minister of Military Affairs, Lieutenant-General Tadeusz Kasprzycki, travelled to Paris to sign the Kasprzycki-Gamelin Convention. This committed the French army to launching a massive attack on Germany with 38 divisions within 15 days of Poland being attacked. But despite the commanders' scepticism, in spring 1939 Hitler still believed that Western European powers would not intervene. The head of the *Luftwaffe* (the German air force), Hermann Göring, suggested that the Führer might adopt a more cautious approach, but Hitler responded that he had always gone for broke: "I have played *va banque* all my life".

The generals presented the Fall Weiss strategy on 15th June, 1939. The plan was straightforward: Army Group North comprising two armies would attack the northern part

Fierce battles bolstered both sides' morale

The garrison at Westerplatte wasn't well known in 1939, but the location of the war's first battle proved to be hugely symbolic.

The Polish garrison on the Westerplatte peninsula proved far harder to defeat than German commanders had envisioned. On the other hand, victory proved symbolic for the invaders – while at the same time the dogged defence played a central role in Polish morale.

The capture of Westerplatte was so important that Hitler visited the battlefield after the fighting. He inspected the ruins and went aboard the battleship *SMS Schleswig-Holstein*, which launched the bombardment.

For Polish soldiers across the country, the defence of Westerplatte gave them the faith to fight on. The garrison's heroics also affected the Germans who allowed its commander, Major Henryk Sucharski, to keep his sword after surrendering.

Poles caught in deadly crossfire

Poland had Europe's fourth largest army in 1939, but its equipment was outdated and relatively few soldiers had been mobilised when the Germans invaded. A difficult situation became impossible when the Soviet Union also attacked from the east.

2 Hitler goes to the front

4th September: the campaign begins smoothly with the advance guard penetrating far into the country. By 4th September, Hitler is visiting areas close to the front.

Hitler felt safe enough to visit units near the front.

3 Poles hit back

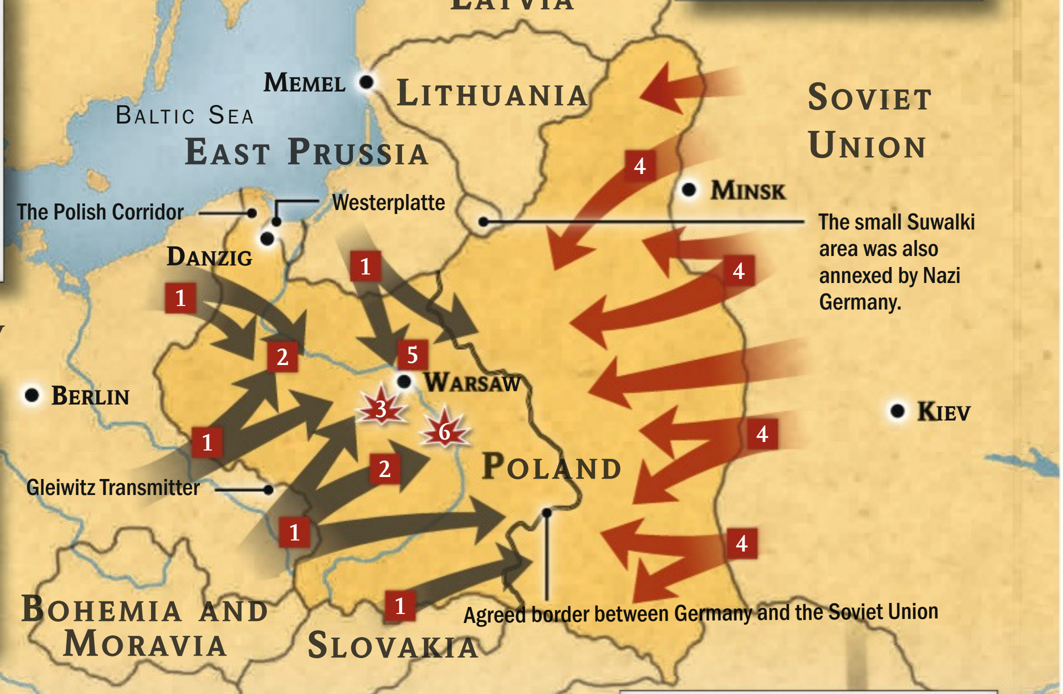
9th September: the Polish Army counterattacks by the River Bzura. It enjoys initial success before the Germans bring in reinforcements, winning the battle just 10 days later.

1 Germany crosses border

1st September: German troops invade Poland from the east (East Prussia), west (Germany) and south (Slovakia). The army makes gains all over the place despite a number of significant losses.

6 Germans celebrate victory

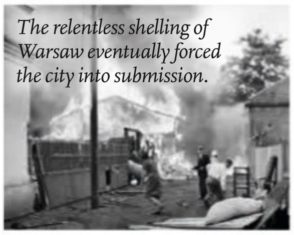
6th October: when the battle of Kock ends, the last Polish forces surrender. Poland is fully occupied by the Soviet Union and Germany. On 5th October, the Germans hold a victory parade in Warsaw.



Gulf of Finland
Estonia
Latvia
Memel
Lithuania
Baltic Sea
East Prussia
Soviet Union
Minsk
The Polish Corridor
Westerplatte
Danzig
The small Suwalki area was also annexed by Nazi Germany.
Germany
Berlin
Warsaw
Kiev
Poland
Gleiwitz Transmitter
Bohemia and Moravia
Slovakia
Agreed border between Germany and the Soviet Union
1
2
3
4
5
6

5 Capital is forced to surrender

27th September: Warsaw falls. After intense bombing by aircraft and artillery, the Polish capital surrenders. Much of the city is destroyed, and around 25,000 civilians are dead.



The relentless shelling of Warsaw eventually forced the city into submission.

4 Soviets attack Eastern Poland

17th September: following their agreement with Nazi Germany, the Soviets invade Eastern Poland. A war on two fronts is too much for the Poles and the Soviets advance quickly and easily.

About 60 German divisions took part in the campaign against Poland, and the panzer units in particular enjoyed easy successes on the flat terrain.

of Poland, while Army Group South's three armies would invade from the south. But despite thorough preparations there was still one unresolved question: how would the Soviet Union react to its neighbour being invaded by Germany?

Joseph Stalin had watched Hitler's manoeuvring in Europe with great interest. The Soviet dictator harboured his own territorial ambitions, including the subjugation of the Baltic nations, parts of Finland, Bessarabia (an area spanning parts of modern-day Moldova and Ukraine) and eastern Poland. The territories had belonged to the Russian Tsarist Empire and Stalin considered them to be a part of the Soviet Union.

The solution to both nations' desire for enlargement came through a mutual agreement. On 23rd August, 1939, German foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, boarded a flight to Moscow. Early the next day, von Ribbentrop and his Soviet colleague, Vyacheslav Molotov, signed the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. The two countries pledged neutrality in case of war with a third party. But the pact also included a secret protocol that allowed Eastern Europe to be divided according to Soviet and German interests. Germany's included Western Poland, while the Soviets claimed Finland and Eastern Poland. The agreement gave Germany a free hand to conquer half of Poland without provoking the Soviet Union, while Stalin could subdue the old Russian territories.

With the agreement in place, Hitler was ready to launch his campaign in the East, and on 25th August, 1939, German troops were ordered to launch their attack the following day. But at the last minute, the Führer hesitated and rescinded the order. However, the message did not reach all sections, and several Wehrmacht units made small inroads into Polish territory. The Polish military ordered a full, if hasty, mobilisation of its forces in response on 31st August.

Hitler's hesitation was due in part to Chamberlain promise, made on 24th August, that Britain would offer military support in the event of a German attack on Poland. But the delay also gave the dictator the opportunity to secure a pretext for his attack. If Hitler could claim that the Poles had struck first, it would be a useful weapon in a war of propaganda.

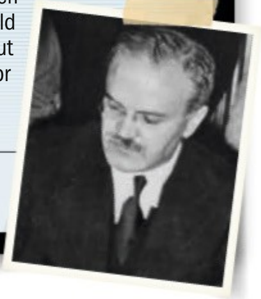
1890-1986

NAME **VYACHESLAV MOLOTOV**

TITLE POLITICIAN AND DIPLOMAT

Politician was demoted

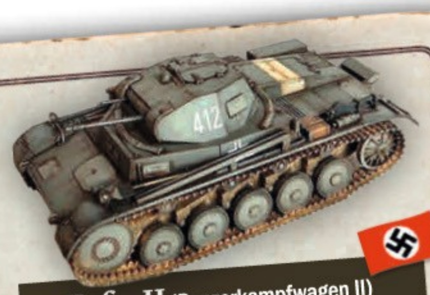
Molotov was one of Stalin's closest allies, and was trusted with signing the non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union. Molotov held several prominent positions, but later fell out of favour and was demoted to Ambassador of Mongolia in 1957.



- **Secretary of the Central Committee.**
- **Foreign Minister 1939-49-1953-56.**

FARMER BECAME THE WAR'S FIRST VICTIM

On the evening of 31st August, 27-year-old SS-Sturmbannführer Alfred Helmut Naujocks, together with a small handful of SS soldiers disguised as Poles, reached the radio transmitter in Gleiwitz (now Gliwice), a small town on the border between Germany and Poland. The SS soldiers had no trouble penetrating the building where the radio transmitter was located. The concierge had left his post and the two police officers who normally guarded the transmitter had been hoodwinked into being elsewhere. In the transmitter room itself, the soldiers attacked four men and led them down to the basement. Then the SS soldiers broadcast a radio message, partly in Polish: "Achtung, achtung! This is Gleiwitz. The radio station is in Polish hands". The spokesman referred to himself as a Polish freedom fighter

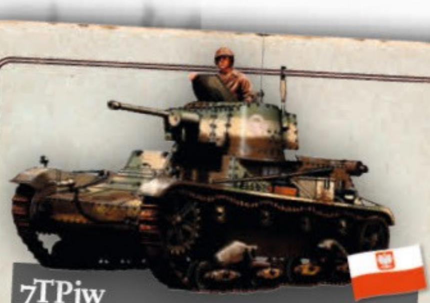


PzKpfw II (Panzerkampfwagen II)

Weight	8.9 tonnes
Crew	3 men
Main weapon	20-mm gun
Top speed	40 km/h
Armour	5-14 mm
Number in 1939	1,223

GUN SMASHED THROUGH ARMOUR

PzKpfw II was armed with a 20-mm gun, which could penetrate through the armour on all contemporary Polish tanks. PzKpfw II was a big improvement over its predecessor, which had only two machine guns. The Germans grouped the tanks into highly efficient special operational units.



7TPjw

Weight	9.9 tonnes
Crew	3 men
Main weapon	37-mm gun
Top speed	37 km/h
Armour	5-17 mm
Number in 1939	95

TANKS WERE OUTNUMBERED

In 1935 the Polish Army ordered its own version of Britain's 'Vickers' tank. The first version, named 7TPjw, was the best Polish tank in 1939 and was superior to most German tanks. But the Poles didn't have enough of them to make a decisive difference in the outcome of the war.

German troops met almost no resistance in places like Sopot when they crossed the border.

and read an anti-German statement that ended with the words "Long live Poland".

Poles went on the defensive

The German plan was to surround and then destroy the Polish army as quickly as possible, allowing German troops to be redeployed west to counter any French offensive.

The Poles' plan, however, was to pursue a dilatory and defensive war to allow the country time to complete its delayed mobilisation and give the French and British an opportunity to attack the Germans from the west.

Unfortunately, not all the Polish units were prepared for a modern war. It was one of few countries to have maintained a large cavalry, which proved to be no match for the German war machine. On the first day of the invasion near Krojanty in the northern part of the country, a Polish cavalry regiment launched an attack on a German infantry unit. Suddenly, armoured vehicles burst out of a nearby forest to attack the regiment. Around 20 riders – including the commander – were killed before the remaining soldiers managed to turn their horses and escape.

Despite mounting fierce opposition, the Polish troops were slowly retreating. German 'Stuka' dive bombers posed a serious threat to both ground forces and civilians who fled in their thousands. From the beginning of the invasion, the Luftwaffe terrorised towns and villages. The idea was to wear down the resistance of the Polish people so that the country would be forced to surrender. In the 40 days it took to subjugate Poland, more than 150,000 civilians were killed.

The Infantry Assault Badge was given to Waffen-SS and Wehrmacht soldiers after the campaign against Poland.

Despite the catastrophic situation, many Poles still clung to the hope of help arriving from Britain and France. On the evening of 1st September, their prayers seemed to be answered: the British demanded that Germany cease its hostilities against Poland and immediately withdraw their troops. But the British set no time limit. The French for their part, put off making a formal declaration of war for two to three days to give the French reserve forces time to move into position. After consulting with the French prime minister, Chamberlain decided to issue a final ultimatum to the Germans on 2nd September. The notice was to be conveyed by the British ambassador in Berlin, Nevile Henderson, to Germany's foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop the following morning.

The Führer froze

A little before 09.00, Henderson arrived at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, von Ribbentrop did not want to meet the ambassador. Instead, he left his interpreter, Paul Schmidt, to meet with Henderson while he was driven to the Reich Chancellory. Schmidt and Henderson stood awkwardly facing one another in the foreign secretary's office as the British ambassador read out the ultimatum: "If His Majesty's Government has not received satisfactory assurances of the cessation of all aggressive action against Poland, and the withdrawal of German troops from that country, by 11 o'clock British Summer Time, from that time a state of war will exist between Great Britain and Germany."

Schmidt put the ultimatum in his bag and hurried to the Reich Chancellory, where he related the British terms to von Ribbentrop and Hitler, who was seated behind his desk.

"When I finished there was complete silence. Hitler sat immobile, gazing before him", the interpreter later recounted. After a while, Hitler turned towards the foreign minister with a furious look and asked in a tone that suggested he had been ill-advised, "What now?"

Von Ribbentrop replied, "I assume that the French will hand in a similar ultimatum within the hour". Only 20 minutes after the expiry of the deadline, Berlin rejected

Britain's demands. But by then the British government had already declared war on Germany. Almost six hours later, the French declaration that von Ribbentrop had predicted arrived.

That same evening, the German dictator, worrying about a great European war that he had hoped to avoid, boarded his private armoured train to visit the front in Poland. Before the train departed, however, Hitler confided to his trusted propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, that he still believed that Britain and France would only conduct a *Kartfferelkreig* (potato war): an economic blockade, rather than all-out war.

GERMAN PINCERS SNAPPED SHUT

Things seemed to be going to plan for Hitler's troops in Poland. The Wehrmacht had already taken several towns and in the south-west of Poland German tanks crossed the River Warta. Despite declaring war, the British and French governments seemed reluctant to intervene.

On 6th September, the Germans captured Krakow, and on the same day the British military mission in Poland sent an ominous report to London stating that the two most serious German attacks were currently coming from the motorised groups at Silesia and the forces moving south towards Warsaw from East Prussia. It went on to warn that if the two jaws of the pincer movement connected, most of the Polish army would be surrounded. The situation was dire for the Poles, and their military commanders urgently needed to find an effective response to the German offensive.

The Polish Army's answer came on 9th September, when a counteroffensive led by General Tadeusz Kutrzeba was launched at the Bzura River just over 100 kilometres west of Warsaw. The general's aim was to interrupt the Germans' advance towards the Polish capital and at the same time recapture the towns of Leczyca and Piatek further south. In the beginning, Kutrzeba benefitted from a tailwind, because the Germans underestimated the size of the Polish forces. The Poles entered Leczyca, where fierce house-to-house fighting took place, then after a number of attempts, they also succeeded in taking Piatek.

A German company, which was defending one of the approach roads to the city, came under heavy shelling and sought cover in trenches left over from World War I. The company commander, Captain Christian Kinder, subsequently wrote about the incident in his book *Männer der Nordmark an der Bzura.*

"In intervals of three to five minutes, hand and rifle grenades landed in the company's trenches. This section was methodically and with surprising accuracy from the right to the left bombarded [...] Two men very near to the Company were riddled with fine fragments and were killed immediately [...] each man now literally felt the moment come when the next hand grenade would strike him."

Christian Kinder was one of the few men from the

»

After the war, von Ribbentrop was convicted of crimes against humanity and hanged.

1893-1946

NAME **JOACHIM VON RIBBENTROP**

TITLE FOREIGN MINISTER

Top Nazi pursued Jews throughout Europe

As a well-travelled businessman Joachim von Ribbentrop had a better knowledge of world politics than most other top Nazis. Following his enrolment in the Nazi Party in 1932, he dreamed of a career as Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs. Hitler first sent von Ribbentrop to London as an ambassador, but in 1938 his dream came true when he succeeded Konstantin von Neurath as head at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Von Ribbentrop's proudest moment came in 1939 when, along with his Soviet colleague Molotov, he signed a non-aggression pact between the two countries. Elsewhere, his role included helping to exterminate Jews in occupied countries. This was mainly why he was convicted of war crimes after the war.

- **German Foreign Minister 1938-45.**
- **Judged by the Nuremberg Process and executed in 1946.**

Nine-year-old Ryszard Pajewski sits in the ruins of what was once his home in Warsaw.

company to survive the fighting. The following day, two German infantry divisions withdrew in chaos. One of the divisions reported to headquarters that the situation was "exceptionally serious" and urged it to send reinforcements. Captain Kinder noted that some of his men, "shaken by the superior power of the enemy, were beginning to be resigned".

The German soldiers' fighting spirit was further weakened when Polish cavalry attacked them from the rear.

Poles lost communications

Shortly after, German High Command reacted by reorganising its forces. At the same time, Polish troops ran into trouble. The units had no air support, and in some places even had to advance without cover from artillery or proper communication, partly because their phone lines had been destroyed. Yet the Poles managed to advance for two days before the Germans beat them back during an attack on 11th September, where they recaptured several kilometres of territory. The following day, the German forces – which now possessed four times as many tanks as the Poles – were on the front foot once more.

560 tonnes of explosives and 70 tonnes of fire bombs were dropped by the Luftwaffe over Warsaw during the final days of the campaign, turning the city into an inferno.

Now it was Kutrzeba's turn to regroup, which gave the Germans time to bring up reinforcements. On 16th September, a German armoured corps attacked from the east, and an armoured division broke through a Polish infantry division's line of defence. Kutrzeba's forces were surrounded and the Luftwaffe relentlessly attacked the encircled Polish troops.

Polish cavalryman Klemens Rudnicki was one of the lucky ones who escaped the pocket. But his fleeing unit was ambushed and surrounded by German forces in a nearby forested area. The Polish cavalry dismounted and fought on the ground: "bullets buzzed like wasps; the artillery began to respond; it was quite impossible to emerge from the forest". Rudnicki wrote later. Only after dark did the Polish cavalry succeed in escaping.

By 21st September, the Battle of Bzura was over. Two Polish armies were shattered, and 100,000 soldiers were either dead or in German captivity. The road to Warsaw was now open for the German main force to join the foremost tank units, which had reached the city walls on 7th September.

In the following days, a trinity of tanks, artillery and aircraft attacked the Polish capital. A Polish officer who participated in the defence of the Warsaw district of Praga described the attacks on 10th September in his diary: "The nerves of the people are still frayed from yesterday's shelling. All about us buildings lie in ruins. The fire at the Transfiguration hospital with its several hundred wounded was a ghastly business. I saw a soldier with both legs amputated crawling from the building on his elbows; other wounded jumped out of the windows on the pavement. Five doctors and several nurses perished in the fire".

By mid-September, Warsaw was completely surrounded. The Germans demanded that the capital surrender, but the commander of the city's defence stubbornly refused.

Doomed city would not give up

By the end of September 1939, the city had a post-apocalyptic air. The bodies of people and horses filled the streets, much of the city lay in ruins, and water pipes, electricity, hospitals and railway stations were smashed. The survivors were starving, drinking water was running out and doctors warned of the risk of disease.

The situation in Warsaw stemmed from Hitler's dissatisfaction that the city had not yet surrendered. As the city continued to hold out, the impatient Führer ordered the Luftwaffe to carry out a relentless bomb campaign. On 25th September, 1,200 aircraft attacked the city. The crews bombed both the capital's industrial estates and residential areas. The following day, the artillery arrived to join in the shelling, while the infantry stormed the condemned city as it burned.

Finally, on 27th September Warsaw gave up the game. 30,000 people had been killed in the inferno, but there was more bad news for the beleaguered Poles: on 17th September, Stalin's Red Army had crossed Poland's eastern border, and by the time Warsaw surrendered, the Soviet forces were already at the line agreed by Ribbentrop and Molotov. Stalin and Hitler were well on their way to wiping the democratic Polish nation off the map.

The Polish government had already fled to Romania and on 6th October, the last Polish forces surrendered. The Polish army had suffered a loss of 70,000 dead and 133,000 wounded in the battle against the Germans, while another 50,000 had fallen in the fighting with the Red Army. In comparison, the Germans reported losses of just 11,000 dead and 30,000 people wounded.

So far, Hitler was winning his high-stake game: he had captured Western Poland without Britain or France having actively intervened. But now that the two countries had declared war, there were new players at the table and the endgame was far from certain.

PERSPECTIVE

Polish army went into exile

Poland's defeat was the end of Poland's army. Many soldiers fled when the country surrendered, but later played an important role in the war.

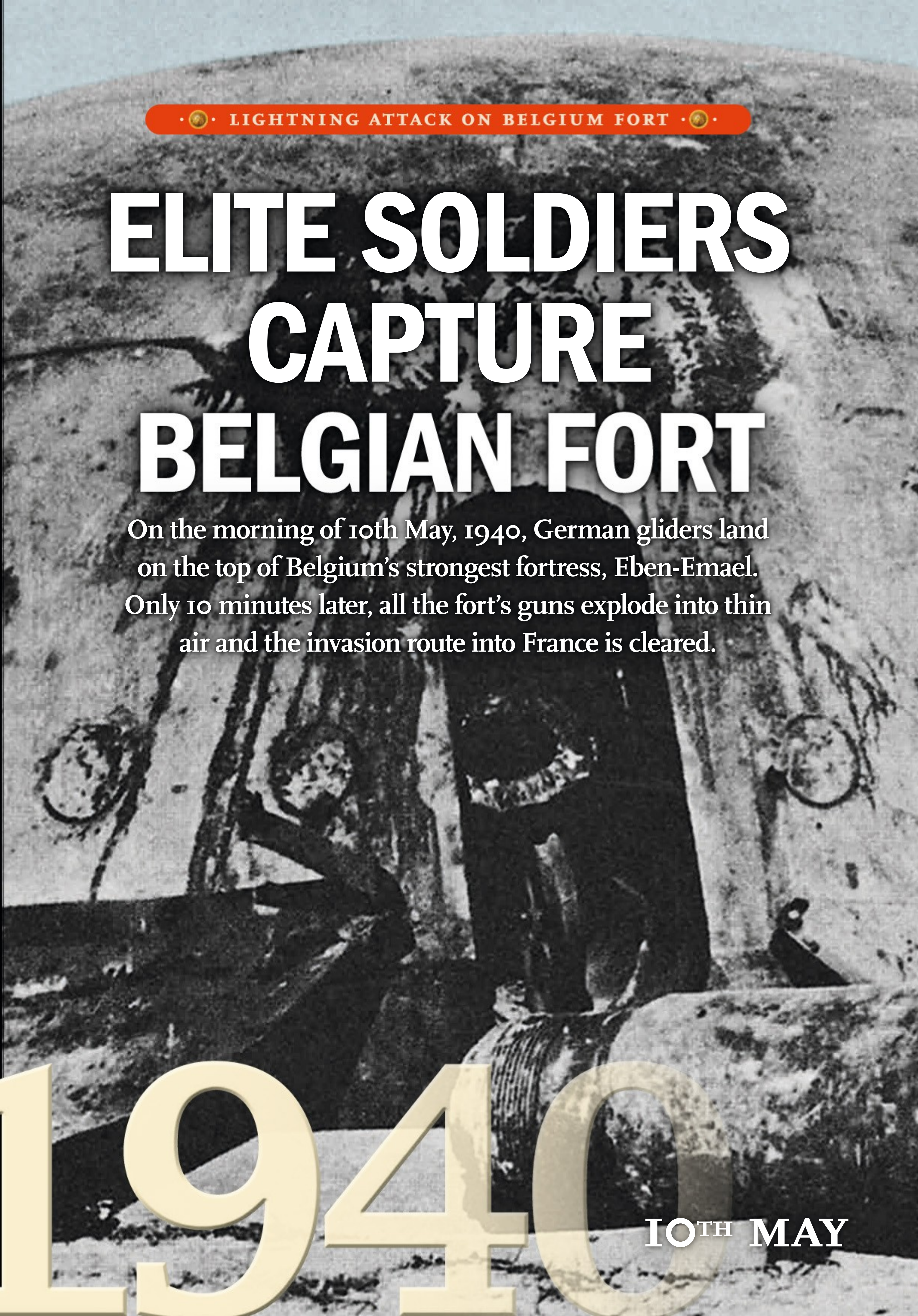
Although Hitler's troops surrounded large parts of the Polish army, many soldiers and pilots managed to escape. Almost 100,000 men crossed the border into Romania, which was still neutral at that time. The vast majority went on to France, where 75,000 Polish soldiers participated in the fight against Nazi Germany in 1940. When France also fell, the Poles fled to England. If you include Polish deserters forced to fight in the German army, the number of Poles fighting in exile during the war was around 250,000.

During the Battle of Britain in 1940, Polish pilots played a particularly vital role. Although the Poles only made up five percent of the pilots in the Royal Air Force, they accounted for 12 percent of the RAF's victories in the battle. Of the 1,736 aircraft the Germans lost, 203 were shot down by Polish pilots.

A significant part of the Polish fleet also escaped. Many of the ships reached England and took part in the sinking of the great German Battleship *Bismarck* in May 1941.

Many Poles received medals for their efforts on the Western Front.

Polish fighter pilots had their own squadron in England.



LIGHTNING ATTACK ON BELGIUM FORT

ELITE SOLDIERS CAPTURE BELGIAN FORT

On the morning of 10th May, 1940, German gliders land on the top of Belgium's strongest fortress, Eben-Emael. Only 10 minutes later, all the fort's guns explode into thin air and the invasion route into France is cleared.

1940

10TH MAY

The guns at Fort Eben-Emael were destroyed before they could bomb the three bridges the Germans needed.

Belgium, 1940

THE STAGE IS SET

The Germans are ready to invade France. But the way forward must be cleared of a major obstacle. German troops cross the Meuse River, but its bridges are guarded by guns at the Belgian fortress Eben-Emael which must now pass on to German hands. Military experts, however, consider the concrete fortress to be impregnable.

The canvas of the weaving planes creaked and fluttered. Eight men were seated tightly together on the narrow bench in the middle of the hull. They shared the sparse space with ammunition belts, machine guns and flame-throwers. Clamped along the side were the warheads that German researchers had spent over a year developing. Soon they would prove their worth.

Through the morning mist the pilot could make out the outline of the Belgian bunker system. He gave a signal, and the men in the plane tightened their grip. The glider bumped over the grass, its cabin shaking uncontrollably before the parachute brake took effect. With a violent judder, the plane stopped and stood completely silent on the grass lawn. Around the glider were large gun turrets. In the underground bunker, around 1,000 Belgian soldiers still slept safely.

Sergeant Hans Niedermeier immediately grabbed an explosive, ran out and stormed the gun's position as he'd been taught during training in Czechoslovakia. It was 05.50 on Friday, 10th May. The attack on Eben-Emael was under way.

Hitler planned a special operation

Seven months earlier in October 1939, Major General Kurt Student, head of Germany's airborne and air-landing troops, marched into a small room in Berlin clad with walnut-coloured panels. At the end of the room the Führer stood behind a large desk studying a detailed map.

The meeting between Hitler and the general was short. The Führer pointed to the Belgian fort Eben-Emael on the map and wanted to know whether it was possible to land gliders at the top of the fortress when the invasion of France, Belgium and Holland began. Student asked for a day to report back.

No soldier had ever attacked with gliders – and never such a highly fortified and largely impenetrable fortress. On the other hand, Student was convinced of the ability of his paratroopers. The next day he confirmed that his soldiers could carry out the task – but only in daylight.

The general's word was enough for Hitler, who had personally devised the plan for the attack on the most important fort in Belgium, Eben-Emael. A paratrooper unit needed to neutralise the Belgian concrete fortress before its

The German elite soldiers trained for six months to learn how to quickly put the fort's defences out of action.

ARMOUR-PIERCING SHELL

New bomb led the way

During the attack On Eben-Emael German forces used shaped-charged explosives for the first time – with deadly effect.

The thick walls of Eben-Emael were penetrated by a specially designed German weapon: shaped-charged explosives.

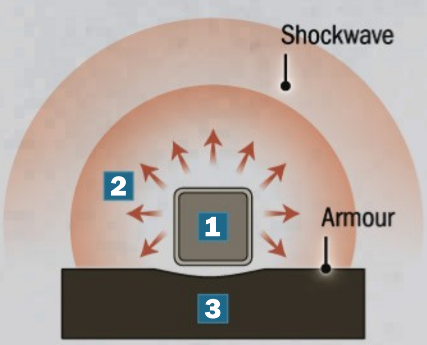
During World War I, French concrete bunkers had survived everything thrown at them – even persistent bombardment from German guns.

To avoid a repeat, Hitler wanted a weapon that could take a bunker out of action with a single explosive.

He had ordered German researchers to secretly develop a more efficient explosive charge. The new warheads focused the explosion in a single direction.

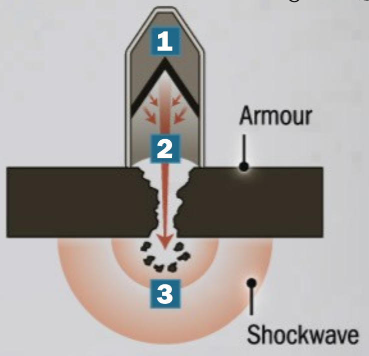
The result was a destructive shockwave that could effectively penetrate both armour and concrete. The principle behind so-called "shaped charges" is still used today in all armoured weapons.

Shaped-charged explosives were used in 1944 in the German panzerfaust, which could blast through tanks.



Common explosive charge

1 The explosive charge is encased in a metal shell.
2 The explosion is equally powerful in every one of its directions.
3 Armour and concrete are only slightly damaged by the explosion.



Shaped explosive charge

1 The explosive is located at the top of the explosive charge.
2 A cavity is filled with air.
3 At the point of explosion, the energy is channelled through the cavity and the shockwave breaks through the armour.

heavy guns slowed the German march into Belgium. The gliders were part of a bigger plan: more paratroopers would secure three important bridges across the border as the gliders were unleashed on the fortress.

Soldiers trained for six months

In November 1939, training began for 85 selected paragliders. The soldiers were given the code name Group Granite and divided into 11 smaller groups. Over the next six months they would undergo an intensive training, which was eventually moved to Czechoslovakia. Here the paratroopers landed again and again on a faithful copy of Eben-Emael built into the Beneš Wall, the border fortifications begun by the Czechs prior to occupation. During the spring, pilots practised the small gliders' approach and landing to perfection.

At the same time, German researchers tested explosives using a new weapon: shaped-charged explosives. The weapons project was so secret that Group Granite soldiers were not allowed to train with the new explosives. The groups handled dummy explosives as they perfected their attack on the machine-gun posts and heavy artillery of Eben-Emael.

The training continued until the groups could land on the 1-km2 fort and reach their targets in less than 10 minutes. In early April 1940, Group Granite was called back to Germany.

Fall Gelb (Operation Yellow) – the German invasion of Holland, Belgium and France – was imminent.

Pilots made emergency landings

Early in the morning of 10th May, 1940, 11 Stuka bombers left the Ostheim air base near Cologne, each one towing a DFS 230 glider connected to it by over 100 metres of steel wire. On board were the soldiers of Group Granite. Shortly after departure, things went wrong. Two of the planes became caught up in the tow ropes. The two pilots cut the wires immediately, and the gliders began a fast descent. Unfortunately, the raid's leader, Lieutenant Rudolf Witzig, was in one of them.

After an emergency landing near Cologne, Witzig leaped out of the glider and sprinted in the dawn light over the fields before he stole a bicycle and later requisitioned a car. Crushed by the prospect of his men being defeated, the lieutenant continued at furious speed towards the Ostheim airfield where he collected a parachute while the crew prepared a new Stuka and DFS 230.

Four hours late, a relieved Witzig was with the group again. But by the time his glider landed at Eben-Emael at 08.00, the initial raid was long over.

Gliders floated silently across Belgium

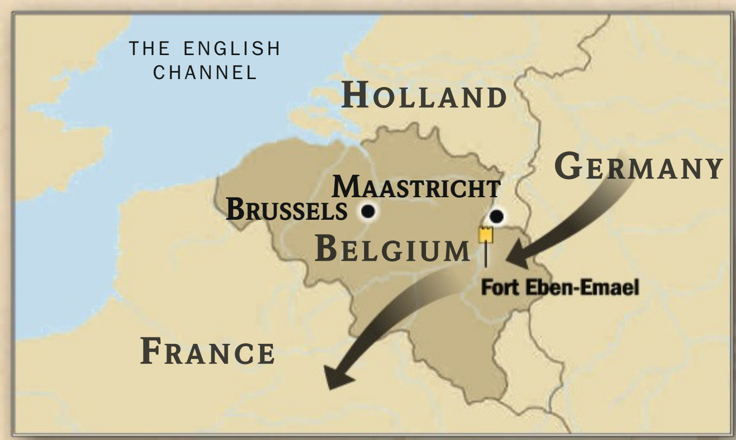
As the orders stated, the pilots in the other aircraft were still travelling westward – led by light flares from the ground.

After exactly 73 kilometres flying, 27 kilometres from Eben-Emael at 2.6 kilometres altitude, the pilots on the Stuka bombers loosened the wires. The gliders

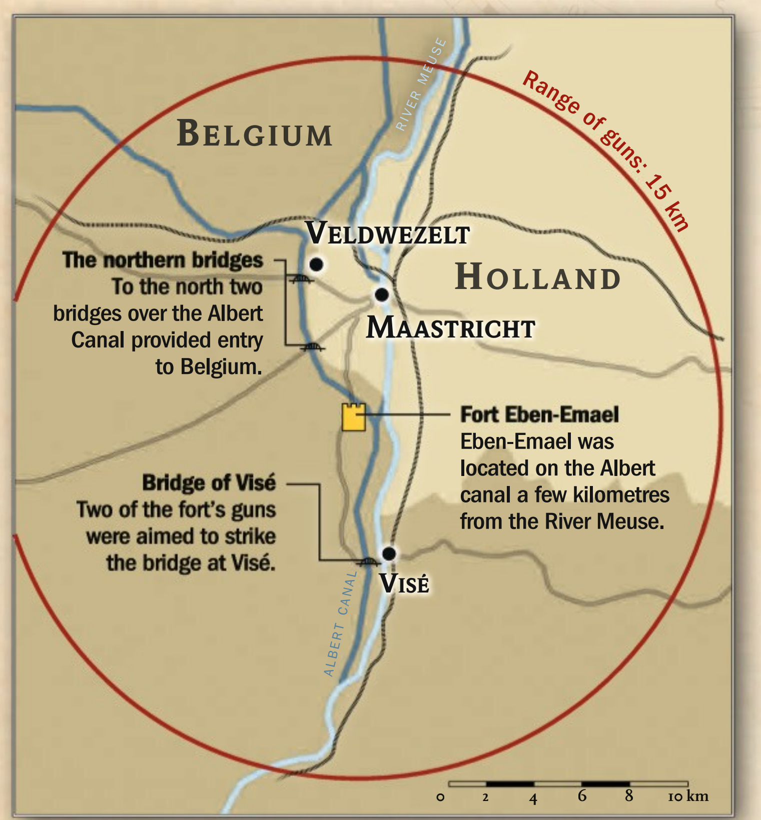
All operation officers were awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

Groups quickly captured fort

A total of 83 paratroopers in gliders would take part. The soldiers were divided into 11 groups, but only nine made it to the fortress. Group 2 had an emergency and returned to Germany while Group 11 was delayed en route.

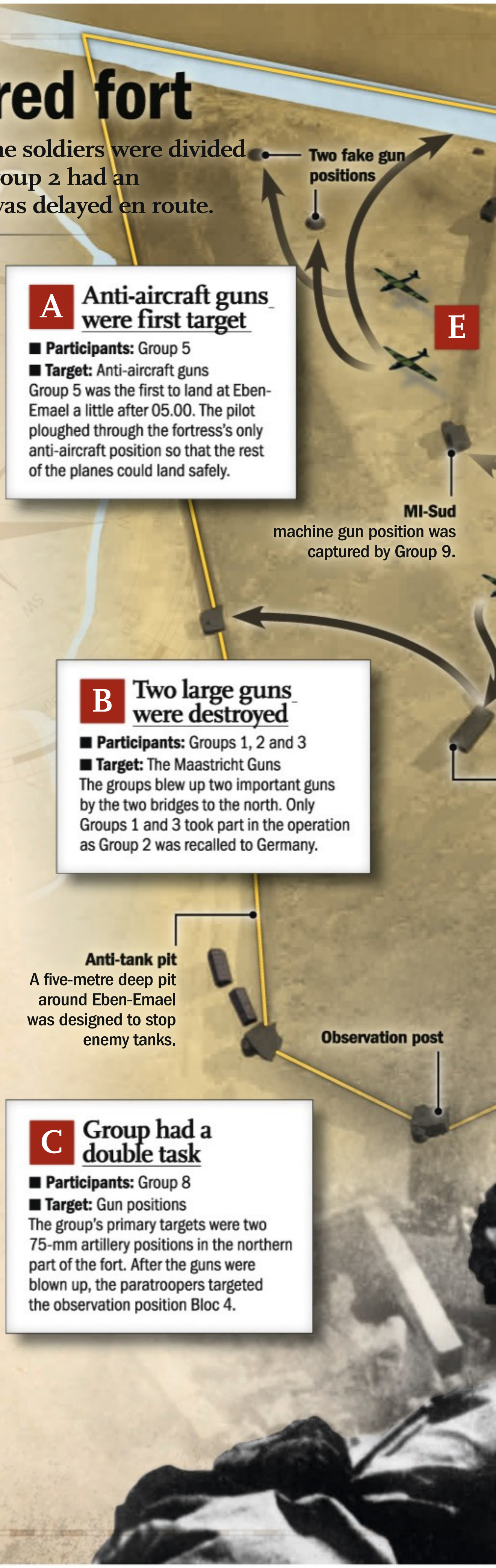

THE ENGLISH CHANNEL
HOLLAND
GERMANY
MAASTRICHT
BRUSSELS
BELGIUM
Fort Eben-Emael
FRANCE

Belgium was on the German invasion route to France
Free access through Belgium was a prerequisite for the German invasion of France. So, the fortress on the River Meuse had to be captured.


BELGIUM
RIVER MEUSE
Range of guns: 15 km
VELDWEZELT
HOLLAND
MAASTRICHT
The northern bridges
To the north two bridges over the Albert Canal provided entry to Belgium.
Fort Eben-Emael
Eben-Emael was located on the Albert canal a few kilometres from the River Meuse.
Bridge of Visé
Two of the fort's guns were aimed to strike the bridge at Visé.
VISÉ
ALBERT CANAL
0
2
4
6
8
10 km

Eben-Emael protected three bridges
Military experts considered the Belgian concrete fortress Eben-Emael to be impregnable. The fort was built at the top of a hill and to the east, the Albert Canal made any frontal attack impossible.

1,000 soldiers defended the fortress. At short notice, they could man Eben-Emael's anti-tank and anti-aircraft defences, but first and foremost, they operated the fortress's long-range 75-mm and 120-mm howitzers that could blow up the bridges over the River Meuse.


Two fake gun positions
E
MI-Sud
machine gun position was captured by Group 9.
Anti-tank pit
A five-metre deep pit around Eben-Emael was designed to stop enemy tanks.
Observation post

A Anti-aircraft guns were first target

- **Participants:** Group 5
- **Target:** Anti-aircraft guns

Group 5 was the first to land at Eben-Emael a little after 05.00. The pilot ploughed through the fortress's only anti-aircraft position so that the rest of the planes could land safely.

B Two large guns were destroyed

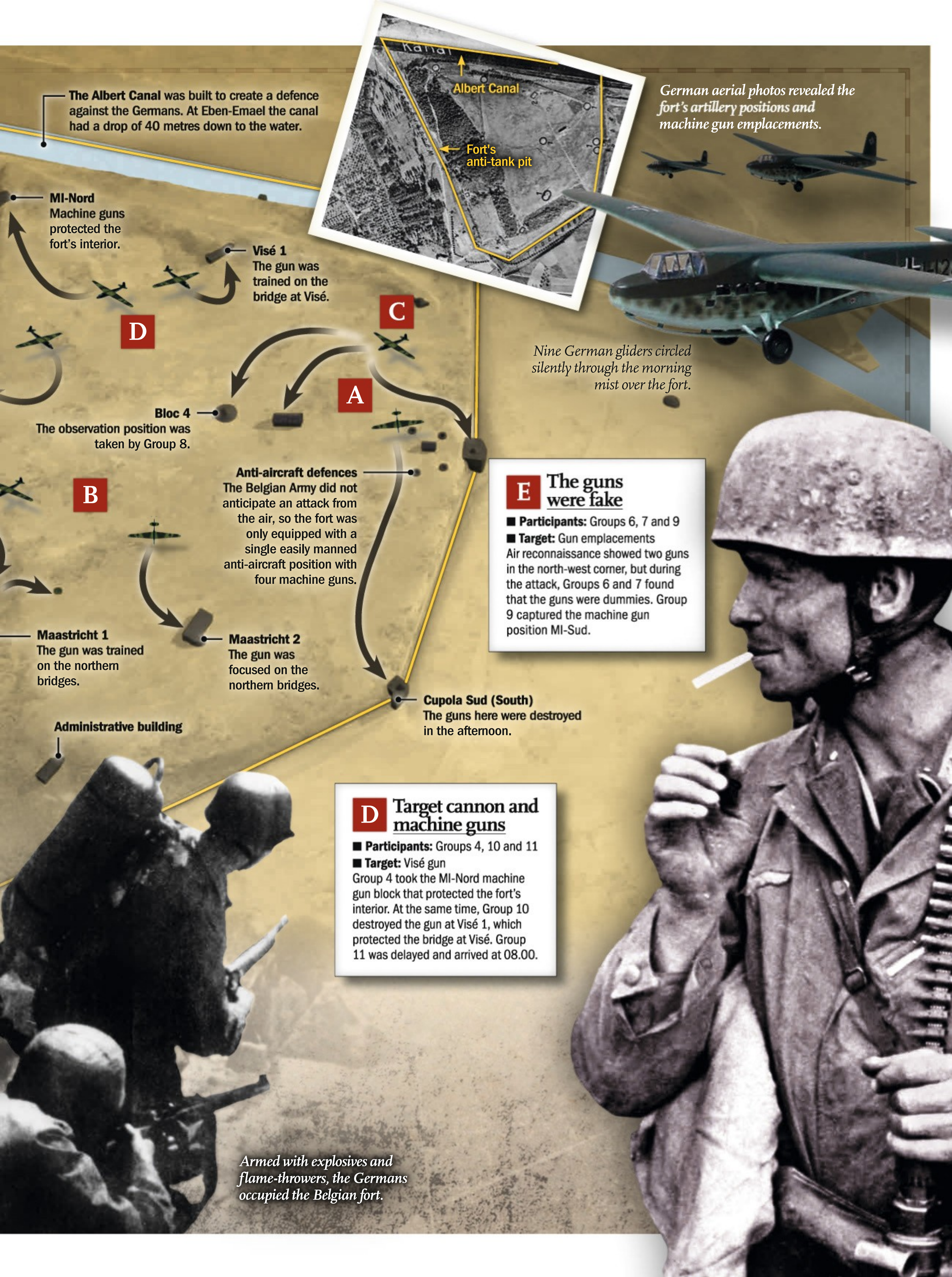
- **Participants:** Groups 1, 2 and 3
- **Target:** The Maastricht Guns

The groups blew up two important guns by the two bridges to the north. Only Groups 1 and 3 took part in the operation as Group 2 was recalled to Germany.

C Group had a double task

- **Participants:** Group 8
- **Target:** Gun positions

The group's primary targets were two 75-mm artillery positions in the northern part of the fort. After the guns were blown up, the paratroopers targeted the observation position Bloc 4.



The Albert Canal was built to create a defence against the Germans. At Eben-Emael the canal had a drop of 40 metres down to the water.

MI-Nord
Machine guns protected the fort's interior.

Visé 1
The gun was trained on the bridge at Visé.

Bloc 4
The observation position was taken by Group 8.

Anti-aircraft defences
The Belgian Army did not anticipate an attack from the air, so the fort was only equipped with a single easily manned anti-aircraft position with four machine guns.

Maastricht 1
The gun was trained on the northern bridges.

Maastricht 2
The gun was focused on the northern bridges.

Cupola Sud (South)
The guns here were destroyed in the afternoon.

Administrative building

German aerial photos revealed the fort's artillery positions and machine gun emplacements.

Nine German gliders circled silently through the morning mist over the fort.

E The guns were fake

- **Participants:** Groups 6, 7 and 9
- **Target:** Gun emplacements

Air reconnaissance showed two guns in the north-west corner, but during the attack, Groups 6 and 7 found that the guns were dummies. Group 9 captured the machine gun position MI-Sud.

D Target cannon and machine guns

- **Participants:** Groups 4, 10 and 11
- **Target:** Visé gun

Group 4 took the MI-Nord machine gun block that protected the fort's interior. At the same time, Group 10 destroyed the gun at Visé 1, which protected the bridge at Visé. Group 11 was delayed and arrived at 08.00.

Armed with explosives and flame-throwers, the Germans occupied the Belgian fort.

The German army was the first to train and use paratroopers.

Pilots in Luftwaffe Junker aircraft wore golden pins with an eagle and swastika.

were left hanging in the air to begin their silent glide across the Belgian border at 124 km/h.

"There was a light ground mist, through which the outlines of the fortification could be dimly perceived", recalled Helmut Wenzel, divisional officer, describing the seconds just before landing.

In the fortress, a guard watching from the anti-aircraft position was astonished by the aircraft that circled down to the fortress through the morning mist.

In an instant, total confusion spread among the Belgian guards. Machine guns fired sporadic rounds as the Belgians were unsure whether the planes were British or German. Only when one of the plane's wings plunged through anti-aircraft artillery positions injuring a man did the truth strike the Belgians. Eben-Emael was under German attack.

A few seconds later, the four soldiers found themselves staring into the barrels of two German machine guns. They threw their weapons to the ground and raised their hands.

Eben-Emael was taken in just 10 minutes

Group 5 had completed its task. Over the next 10 minutes, Group Granite fully realised the effect of its new shaped-charged explosives. Eben-Emael's thick concrete walls and powerful guns were quickly and efficiently destroyed by the targeted explosions.

Sergeant Niedermeier, who first triggered a charge, described the effect on an observation bunker: "We could see that the gun had been torn from its mounting [and] lay like a crumpled matchbox in the corner. The opening was 60 cm x 60 cm so it was big enough for anyone to climb in easily".

Beside the blasted gun lay dead and injured Belgian soldiers. The picture was the same throughout the fort. The many months of training had paid dividends. Professionally, those involved with Group Granite destroyed their designated targets. And before Eben-Emael's heavy guns could fire a single shot, the German paratroopers had destroyed them and the other outside positions at the fort.

Soldiers barricaded themselves in

The Belgians who survived the explosions fled into the fort's underground corridors. Here they were effectively safe from the Germans, but at the same time were trapped within.

The elite German troops could easily lay siege to the few outposts of the bunker's complex. For the next 28 hours, the Germans held Eben-Emael while Belgian defenders were left cut off in the fort's interior.

From the observation points, the paratroopers could see column after column of German lorries, crews and tanks roll west across the now clear border. And on the evening of 11th May, the German army's commanders were able to send a telegram to Hitler:

"… Eben-Emael, which dominates crossings over the Meuse River and the Albert Canal near and west of Maastricht, surrendered on Saturday afternoon. 1,000 men taken prisoner".

DFS 230

Length	11 m
Width	22 m
Weight	1,300 kg
Engine	None
Crew	10 (including pilot)

ATTACK AIRCRAFT BUILT FROM CANVAS AND STEEL PIPES

The DFS 230 was designed in the 1930s. The wings and hull were made from light steel pipes and tubes clad with canvas. The glider was towed by a plane using a wire 110 metres long. With the target sighted, the plane released the DFS 230, which glided silently towards the enemy.

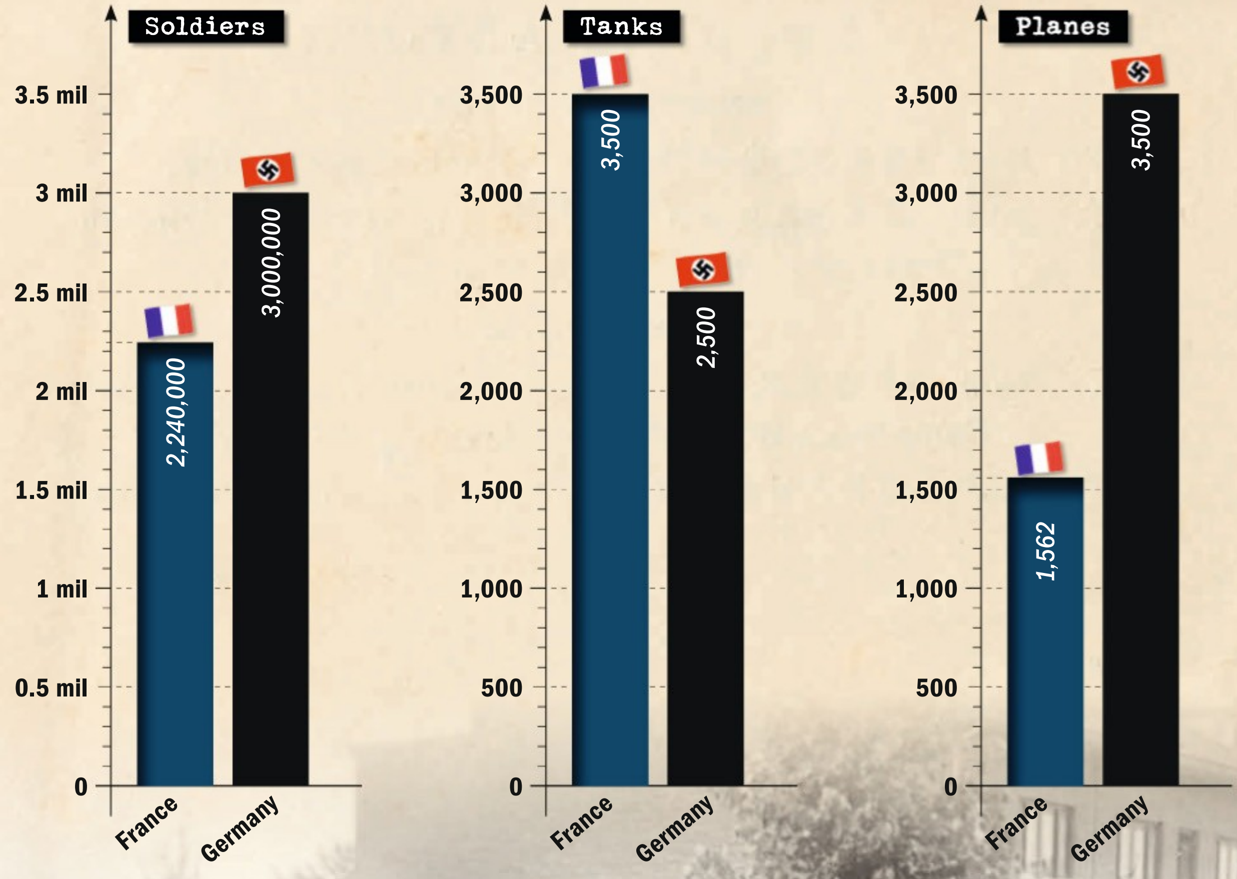
The Germans were set for blitzkrieg against France

With the conquest of Eben-Emael and Belgium on 10th May, 1940 the way was open for German forces to continue their blitzkrieg, fast and overwhelming attacks using tanks and aircraft against France

The rapid victory in Belgium gave the Germans a psychological edge, but their military superiority in the air was the Nazis' biggest advantage. Their dominance was not just down to sheer weight of numbers – many French aircraft were outdated. The French, on the other hand, had more tanks – an advantage that their army did not fully utilise. Unlike the Germans, they did not group their tanks in large units that could overwhelm anything and anyone.

German tanks were organised into special armoured divisions that had great impact.

Germans had the most soldiers and aircraft



Soldiers were superior
Germany had a large army and its troops were well-trained.

Tanks used incorrectly
French tanks were usually allocated to other units.

Luftwaffe was superior
In the air, the new German Luftwaffe held sway.

The surviving Belgian Eben-Emael soldiers were led into captivity by the Germans.

TACTICAL GERMAN OFFENSIVE

BLITZKRIEG FORCES EUROPE TO ITS KNEES

At the beginning of World War II, Germany has fewer tanks, soldiers and aircraft than France and Britain. However, Prussian General Heinz Guderian has, with Hitler's approval, developed a groundbreaking military tactic: blitzkrieg. The four-phase approach of this new strategy makes Germany's armoured divisions invincible during the first years of the war.

1940

12TH MAY

Following an initial aerial bombardment, German infantry storms the enemy's lines flanked by tanks. The assault is supported by powerful artillery guns.

Sedan, 1940

THE STAGE IS SET

Hitler's armies blast through France's defences. In six weeks, the Germans have overrun one of Europe's major nations thanks to a new form of warfare. Conceived by a veteran of WWI, the new tactic is known as *blitzkrieg* (lightning war) and is based on a combination of light bombers and fast armoured divisions.

Sedan
France

Radio contact between the tanks ensured success in joint attacks.

On 12th May, 1940, the Stuka bombers swarmed over the French trenches near the town of Sedan. Germany's invasion of France was in full swing. The air resonated with explosions and the howling sirens of small dive bombers that plunged into almost vertical dives before releasing their 250-kilogram bombs. The French soldiers at Sedan had unknowingly become the victims of history's greatest air strikes so far – and to the Germans' new blitzkrieg style of war.

The sounds of Stuka sirens shredded the nerves of the soldiers on the ground. They hunkered down into their trenches. Suddenly, the noise from the screaming Stukas was drowned out by an infernal thunder as hundreds of German artillery guns opened fire; at 15.30, a devastating bombardment began to rain destruction on what was left of the French trenches.

The shells tore the barbed wire into pieces and smashed the defender's bunkers. German planes and guns spent the next 30 minutes systematically bombing the French lines.

At 16.00, the pounding of the guns died out as suddenly as it had begun. The first tactical phase of the Germans' new lightning war was over; German reconnaissance units would now probe the defences, searching for the weakest point in the destabilised French positions.

The theory behind the new tactic had been formulated by a veteran of the WWI – Heinz Guderian – who had first-hand experience of how bloody and hopeless trench warfare could be. He realised that a massive combined attack by aircraft and tanks could break an opponent's line of defence. Hitler was thrilled with Guderian's ideas and made the tactician a general shortly after seizing power in 1933.

To ensure the success of Guderian's lightning war, Hitler developed one of World War II's most effective war machines: the armoured divisions.

Previously, the German infantry, artillery and tanks had been distributed throughout the different forces. Now they were grouped together to create devastating weapons. The divisions' mobility and their ability to exploit the strengths of their various units were the main reasons why the Germans won so many victories in the first years of the war. An individual armoured division usually consisted of 16,000 men and 3,000 vehicles. This included around 200 tanks, gathered in large groups, which could easily defeat the small, scattered clusters of tanks fielded by the enemy.

In addition to the armoured weapons, the victorious divisions were equipped with assault guns and soldiers in armoured vehicles that supported the tanks. Finally, mobile supply troops with fuel and ammunition completed the German's new war machine, which at the beginning of World War II shattered all resistance.

ARMOURED DIVISION BREAKS THROUGH

Two days after the barrage at Sedan on 14th May, 1940, General Heinz Guderian's 2nd Panzer Army blazed through the French barbed wire on the Sedan front. The day before, engineering troops in personnel carriers had declared that this was weakest point in the French line of defence – and now the heavy tanks were rolling through what was left of the enemy's fortifications.

The rotating tracks of the 200 attacking tanks churned up the ground and made the French trenches shake. Exhausted after the intense artillery bombardment and demoralised by the Stukas' screaming sirens,

NAME **HEINZ GUDERIAN**

TITLE GERMAN GENERAL

1888–1954

Prussian officer invented lightning war

Prussian officer Heinz Guderian had personal experience of failed German attempts to capture Allied trenches in northern France during WWI. His time made him realise how fast vehicles and aircraft could change war and help overrun entrenched positions. If tanks were assembled in large groups, they could break through enemy lines and secure victory. Guderian described his theories in the book *Achtung – Panzer!* and the tactics proved effective on the battlefields of Poland in 1939 and the following year in France: both countries were beaten in less than six weeks.

- **Veteran from World War I.**
- **Architect of German blitzkrieg tactics.**

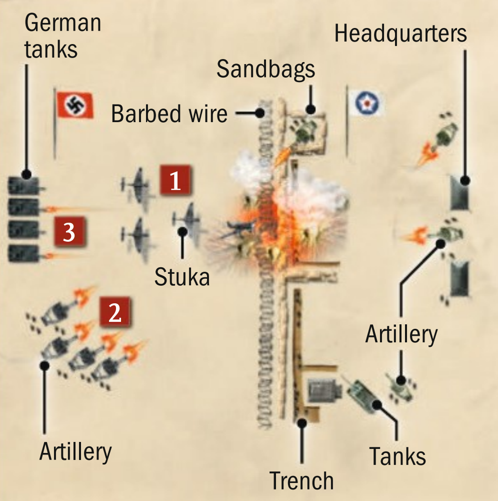
“A combined attack by aircraft and tanks could break the opponent’s lines”

Heavy German artillery shelled Soviet defences on the Eastern Front in 1942. Blitzkrieg tactics were less effective against stubborn Red Army pockets of resistance.

Four phases secured German victories

The German strategy was designed to engineer a rapid breakthrough of the opponent's lines of defence, followed by the systematic destruction of any remaining resistance among the enemy's isolated forces.

PHASE 1


German tanks
Headquarters
Sandbags
Barbed wire
1
3
Stuka
2
Artillery
Artillery
Tanks
Trench

Softening the enemy

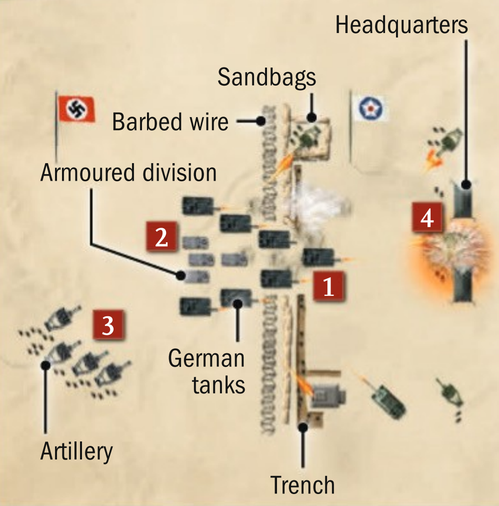
Artillery guns start a vigorous bombardment of the weakest point in the enemy's position, while dive bombers take out enemy tanks and their defences.

1 **Stukas attack** the enemy guns, tanks, bunkers and other heavily fortified defences.

2 **Artillery fires** thousands of shells against the weakest point in the enemy front line at the same time.

3 **Tanks help** with the bombardment, but successfuly stay safe from any enemy counterattacks.

PHASE 2


Headquarters
Sandbags
Barbed wire
Armoured division
2
4
1
3
German tanks
Artillery
Trench

Piercing the defence

Tank units penetrate the enemy's defence; infantry forces follow.

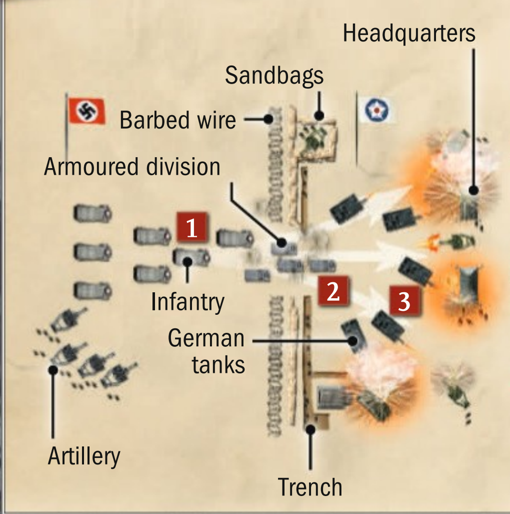
1 **Tanks assault** the weakest point in the enemy line of defence in a wedge formation. Once through, they attack enemy command centres.

2 **Soldiers in armoured** vehicles support the tanks' assault, advancing behind enemy lines to take new targets.

3 **Artillery is ready** to attack any highly fortified enemy positions.

4 **The enemy's headquarters** is relatively unprotected and vulnerable behind the front line.

PHASE 3


Headquarters
Sandbags
Barbed wire
Armoured division
1
Infantry
2
3
German tanks
Artillery
Trench

Attacking deep

Tanks continue into enemy territory, severing all communication. The troops start to surround the enemy.

1 **Troop transports** move forward. Their job is to ensure that enemy troops do not close the gap in the line of defence and cut off the attacking tanks.

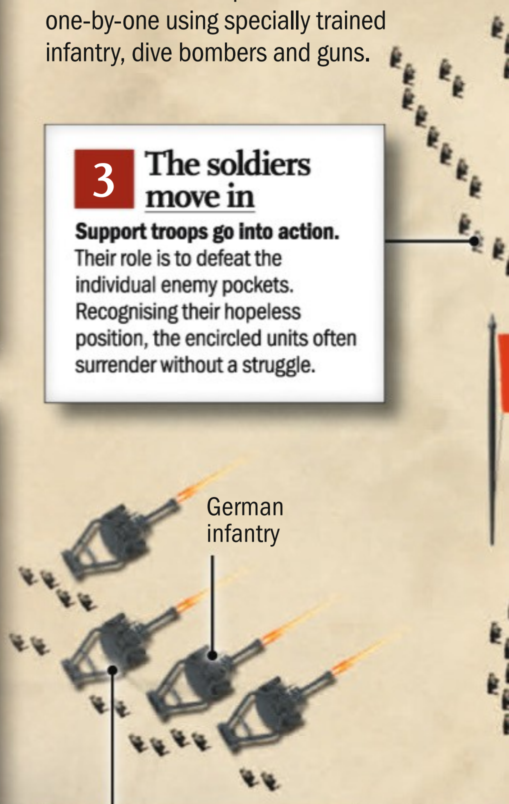
2 **Tanks attack** the enemy headquarters, disable their communication systems and create chaos and confusion.

3 **The motorised forces** spread deep behind the enemy line. Tasks include surrounding the forces manning defence installations and defeating supply troops.

PHASE 4

Fighting the enemy

The enemy forces are isolated in 'pockets' – they no longer have access to supplies or contact with the outside world. The pockets are defeated one-by-one using specially trained infantry, dive bombers and guns.

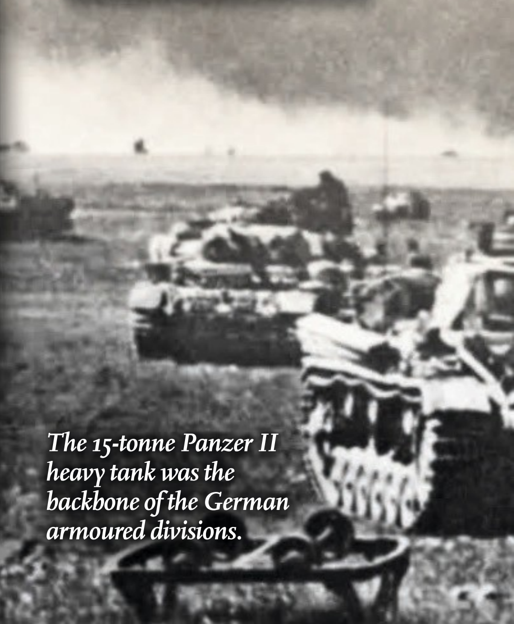

German infantry

3 The soldiers move in

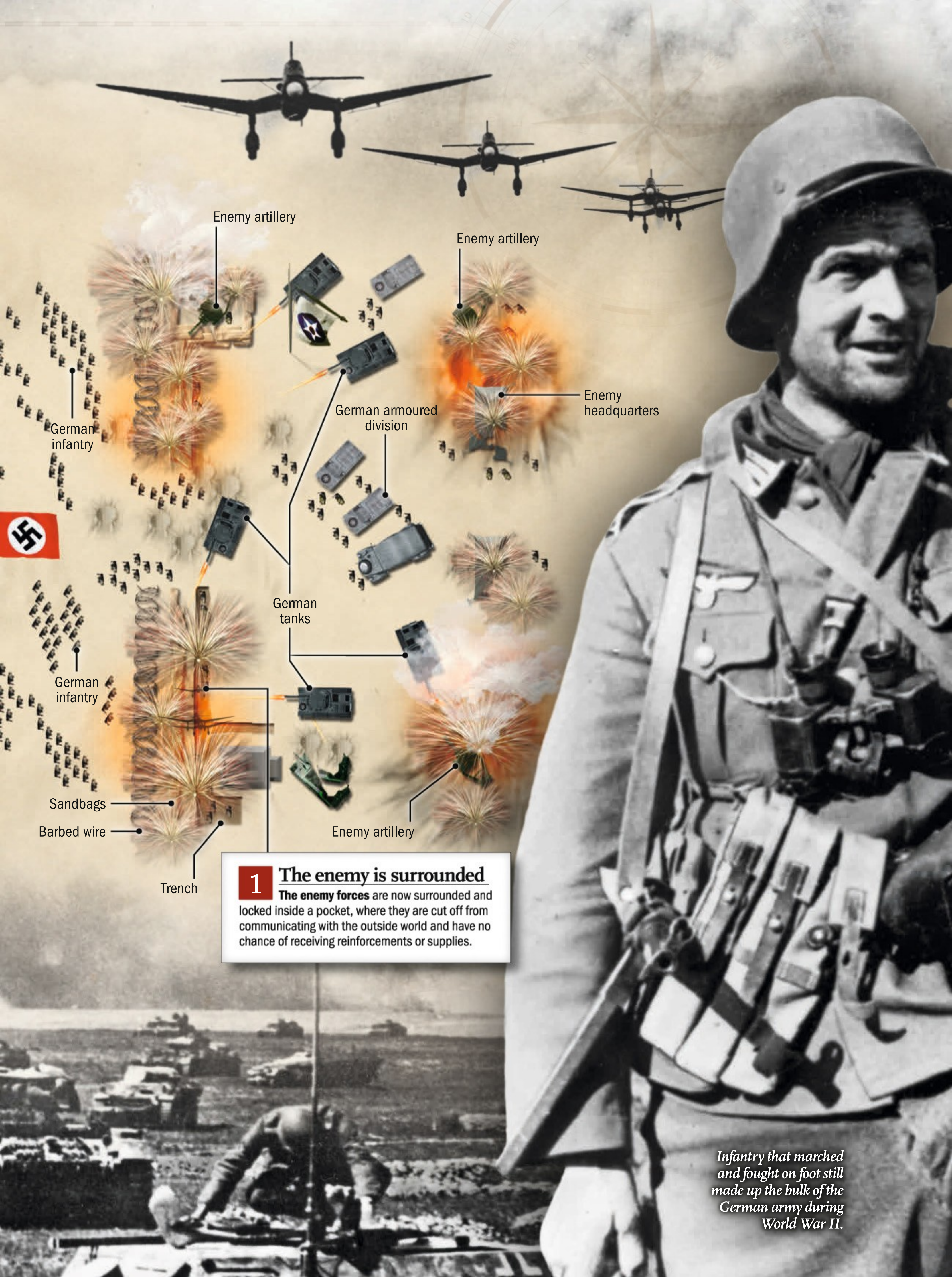
Support troops go into action. Their role is to defeat the individual enemy pockets. Recognising their hopeless position, the encircled units often surrender without a struggle.

2 Massive bombing

The artillery launches a fierce bombardment of the pockets, which is designed to weaken enemy resistance.



The 15-tonne Panzer II heavy tank was the backbone of the German armoured divisions.


Enemy artillery
Enemy artillery
Enemy headquarters
German armoured division
German infantry
German tanks
German infantry
Sandbags
Barbed wire
Trench
Enemy artillery

1 The enemy is surrounded

The enemy forces are now surrounded and locked inside a pocket, where they are cut off from communicating with the outside world and have no chance of receiving reinforcements or supplies.

Infantry that marched and fought on foot still made up the bulk of the German army during World War II.

German soldiers fight for control of one of the Maginot Line's fortifications in France in June 1940. Flame-throwers were often used to clear bunkers during the battles for these fortified positions.

German troops attack a French position in June 1940. The soldiers are supported by fire from powerful artillery units.

Waffen-SS' armoured crews wore a black cap with German eagles and Totenkopf *skull and crossbones.*

the French soldiers fled in panic. France's army commanders tried to summon reserves to plug the widening gap in their line, but the thousands of panicking soldiers were creating chaos, and their heavy tanks became stuck on the jammed roads. Meanwhile, the German tanks rolled steadfastly on through the kilometre-wide gap and German infantry established defensive positions with mortars and anti-tank guns.

Infantry in the armoured divisions of World War II had armour-plated personnel carriers that kept them safe and could quickly move them around the battlefield.

The Germans storm out

French reserves marching towards the front were easy pickings for the German tanks and reconnaissance units. Stukas chased French tanks, bombing them one by one. Only 20 kilometres behind the front line, Guderian ordered his tanks to the west – behind the heavily fortified Maginot Line, which extended along the French-German border.

The German manoeuvre surrounded the French soldiers in what was supposed to be their 'impregnable' fortress. Now, they were isolated without any possibility of help. The rest of the German divisions stormed towards the English Channel, reaching it in 10 days. 400,000 Allied soldiers in north-west France and Belgium were thus cut off from their main force and unable to obtain supplies and ammunition. Trapped in a 'pocket' at the French port of Dunkirk, they were forced to escape to England in a thrown-together flotilla that included everything from warships to fishing boats.

France's army was on the point of collapse, but the final defeat of the encircled forces would come at the hands of Germany's special support troops.

The Germans biggest victory

At the end of May 1940, the encircled French soldiers were fighting for their lives in the fortifications at Sedan and along the Maginot Line. The German special support units moved from bunker to bunker with flame-throwers and grenades. The prospect of dying in a hopeless battle caused the French soldiers to surrender in their thousands. Soon, the road to Paris was open, and on 25th June, 1940, France surrendered.

In just six weeks, the German armoured divisions defeated one of Europe's great powers and assuaged many Germans of the bitterness they had felt following their defeat in WWI. The French campaign was destined not only to be the Germans' first blitzkrieg, but also their greatest. The following year – during the invasion of the Soviet Union – the lightning war began to slow as the Russians fought bitterly for every pocket.

The fierce battles delayed the infantry's advance and isolated the German armoured divisions several hundred kilometres ahead of the rest of the army. The lack of fuel, ammunition and auxiliary troops ultimately halted the German advance just 20 kilometres shy of Moscow in December 1941. Guderian's blitzkrieg had finally stalled.

Allies copied blitzkrieg tactics

Following Germany's early victories, the Allies soon adopted lightning war tactics. From 1942, they fought Hitler at his own game in offenses both on the Eastern Front and on the battlefields of Western Europe. Blitzkrieg tactics are still used today when there is sufficient air and armoured strength available.

The Battle of Stalingrad

France's rapid defeat in 1940 led the US, Soviet and British military to change the structure of their armies. Then, the Allies concentrated their tanks in large units, rather than spreading them throughout their forces. From spring 1942, they also implemented the blitzkrieg four-phase approach to fight the formerly invincible German army – including at the Battle of Stalingrad, where in November 1942, the Soviets surrounded the German 6th Army capturing 300,000 soldiers.

Soviet artillery surrounded the Germans troops at Stalingrad.

Canadian armoured forces participated in the dash through France in 1944.

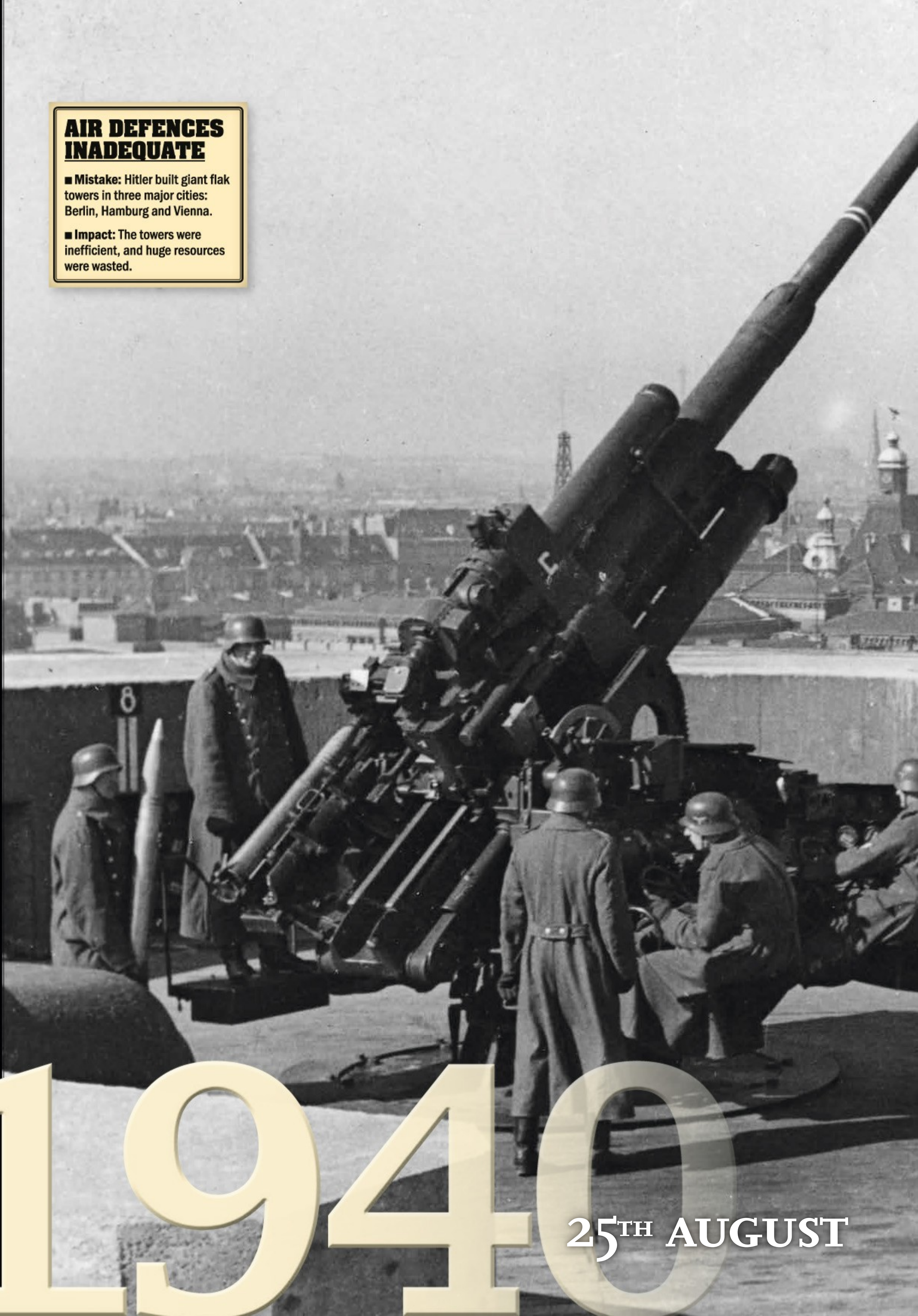
The outbreak from the bridgehead after D-Day

Once the Allies had landed on the Normandy coast in June 1944, they advanced rapidly. The outbreak from the bridgehead established in the north of France proceeded quickly. Aircraft and armoured units united to break the German lines and clear the path for the liberation of Paris.

Gulf wars against Iraq

Even today, Heinz Guderian's groundbreaking theories of lightning war still apply. The two Gulf Wars that were waged against Iraq in 1990-1991 and 2003 – are text-book examples of the superiority of modern warfare. The coalition first softened up the enemy with a lengthy and powerful bombardment of strategic targets, followed by a rapid armoured assault, which quickly defeated Saddam Hussein's weakened forces.

American F-16 fighters bombed Iraq during Operation Desert Storm in 1991.



AIR DEFENCES INADEQUATE

■ **Mistake:** Hitler built giant flak towers in three major cities: Berlin, Hamburg and Vienna.

■ **Impact:** The towers were inefficient, and huge resources were wasted.

1940

25th AUGUST

GIANT FLAK TOWERS WILL SAVE BERLIN

After Allied aircraft unexpectedly bomb Berlin in August 1940, Germany realises its air defences are weak. Hitler responds by building concrete towers of unprecedented size, armed with massive artillery. The Führer believes they will put an end to the attacks.

Shells were hoisted in a lift and carried to the flak tower's guns by soldiers.

Germany, 1940

THE STAGE IS SET

Germany built up its air defences ahead of the outbreak of war, designed to protect the country against bombing raids. But the defences are inadequate, so Hitler orders the construction of gigantic flak towers in Berlin and other cities. The monstrous buildings are costly in both manpower and money – and will have little effect.

Berlin
GERMANY

British bombers headed towards Berlin on the evening of 25th August, 1940. The day before, the Luftwaffe had bombed London's financial centre and Oxford Street in the West End, and it was time for retaliation. The British targets were the weapons and ammunition plants north of the Tempelhof Airport in Berlin.

When the planes reached Germany's capital that night, they were subject to shelling from the ground, forcing them to fly higher. But from here, the bombers could not hit their targets precisely and many shells fell randomly. Most ended up in fields and forests, but some hit a residential area. When Hitler heard about the attack he was furious – not least because Hermann Göring, head of the Luftwaffe, had solemnly promised that the enemy planes would never be allowed to bomb German soil.

> “I had never seen flak so thick”
>
> Sergeant Melvin Larson, US Toggalier

Over the following week, Berlin's citizens were forced back to their shelters several times. British bombers returned on the 28th and 30th August, and many civilians lost their lives.

Hitler soon realised that Göring's promise couldn't be kept and that Berlin's air defences would need to be improved. The Führer dreamed of transforming the capital into an impregnable fortress with the help of flak batteries. Flak is an abbreviation of the German word *“Fliegerabwehrkanone”* (aircraft defence cannon), but also refers to the actual shooting. The city was to be surrounded by flak batteries that could deliver such heavy fire from the ground that Allied planes would not dare approach. Simultaneously, battalions of Luftwaffe fighter aircraft were stationed in the region. To crown it off, Hitler decided to build a series of giant concrete towers with powerful guns arrayed on top. The indestructible towers would be named flak towers and would bring the huge guns up over Berlin's rooftops. From here, the rapid-fire guns would have a decent line of sight and form an impenetrable wall of shell fragments and destructive pressure waves.

In September 1940, Hitler issued the order to begin work on Berlin's three flak towers. The first – and most important – tower would be located close to the city centre – right next to Berlin Zoo. It soon acquired the nickname “Zoobunkeren”. A similar tower in the Humboldthain district would protect the north of the capital, while a third tower in the Friedrichshain district would block attacks from the east.

WORK WAS CARRIED OUT AROUND THE CLOCK

The construction task was huge – 120,000 tonnes of gravel, 35,000 tonnes of cement and 9,500 tonnes of steel reinforcement were shipped to the site at Zoobunkeren alone. Paid labour worked from early morning to late evening, and then forced labourers and prisoners of war worked until dawn. In total, 3,250 men worked around the clock to raise the defences as soon as possible.

To maximise the strength of the concrete walls, the moulding process could never stop as cracking between dry and wet concrete might have occurred. Even when the first frosts appeared in December, the day and night shifts carried on with the building materials warmed up and heaters distributed around the site.

The first flak tower was completed at the end of March, 1941. The concrete giant stood 39 metres high and 70.5 metres wide, dwarfing the tree tops in Berlin Zoo. In October the same year, the second tower was ready for use, while the third and final tower was completed in April 1942.

Each tower's gun deck contained anti-aircraft guns, each weighing 27 tonnes. When the guns

NAME FRIEDRICH TAMMS

TITLE ARCHITECT

1904-1980

Builder continued career after war

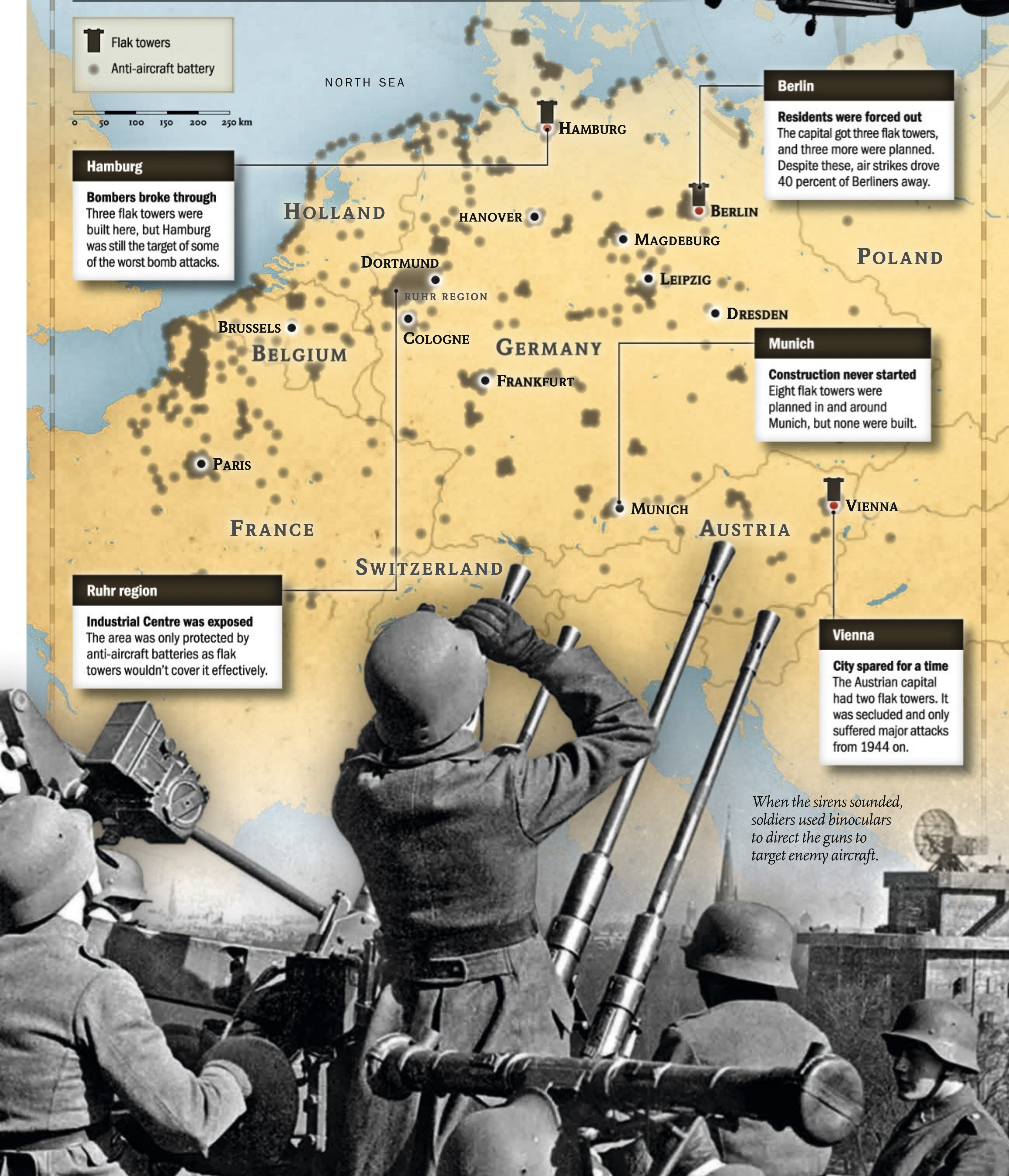
The task of building the flak towers fell to architect Friedrich Tamms. Hitler was extremely pleased with his work, and the Führer placed Tamms on the so-called “Gottbegnadeten List”, a list of artists who were exempted from military service.

After the war Tamms had a successful career, including being responsible for urban planning in Dusseldorf.

- **Studied with Albert Speer.**
- **Renovated the Rheinstadion in 1974.**

Batteries defended Nazi Germany

Despite Göring's promise that no enemy aircraft would reach Germany, the Third Reich was relentlessly attacked and had to defend itself with flak towers as well as fortifications concentrated on the coast and in urban centres.


Flak towers
Anti-aircraft battery
NORTH SEA
0 50 100 150 200 250 km
HAMBURG
HOLLAND
HANOVER
BERLIN
MAGDEBURG
POLAND
DORTMUND
LEIPZIG
RUHR REGION
DRESDEN
BRUSSELS
COLOGNE
BELGIUM
GERMANY
FRANKFURT
PARIS
MUNICH
VIENNA
FRANCE
AUSTRIA
SWITZERLAND

Hamburg

Bombers broke through
Three flak towers were built here, but Hamburg was still the target of some of the worst bomb attacks.

Berlin

Residents were forced out
The capital got three flak towers, and three more were planned. Despite these, air strikes drove 40 percent of Berliners away.

Munich

Construction never started
Eight flak towers were planned in and around Munich, but none were built.

Ruhr region

Industrial Centre was exposed
The area was only protected by anti-aircraft batteries as flak towers wouldn't cover it effectively.

Vienna

City spared for a time
The Austrian capital had two flak towers. It was secluded and only suffered major attacks from 1944 on.

When the sirens sounded, soldiers used binoculars to direct the guns to target enemy aircraft.

Smaller guns on tower balconies were designed to protect against attacks from dive bombers.

were fired, the recoil pressure was 25 tonnes, causing the tower to shake. A solid concrete ceiling 3.5-metres thick was required to prevent the vibrations damaging the rest of the tower as well as protect against Allied bombs. Smaller cannons were placed on the balconies below the upper deck, their primary responsibility being to keep diving enemy aircraft at bay. There was one balcony on each of the four corners of the tower.

GAS MASKS WERE TESTED IN THE TOWER

Further down the tower's floors contained installations that – as time went by – became more precious to Berlin's citizens than the guns. There were large shelters for the civilian population along with a smaller hospital staffed by doctors and nurses. In addition, the flak towers housed workshops producing essential military equipment, specially ventilated rooms for storing art treasures from Berlin's museums and even an air-tight room for testing gas masks.

The towers' primary function was to defend Berlin airspace. Together, the towers provided 12 128-millimetre twin guns. Positioning was controlled by radar and the guns could fire up to 24 shells per minute. The air defences were co-ordinated from a nearby command tower. Towers were also built in Hamburg and Vienna – albeit in slightly different versions. Unfortunately for Hitler, they'd prove ineffective. Throughout the war, the cities' eight towers shot down just over 200 Allied aircraft between them – a poor return given they were subject to hundreds of attack waves, each containing up to 1,000 aircraft.

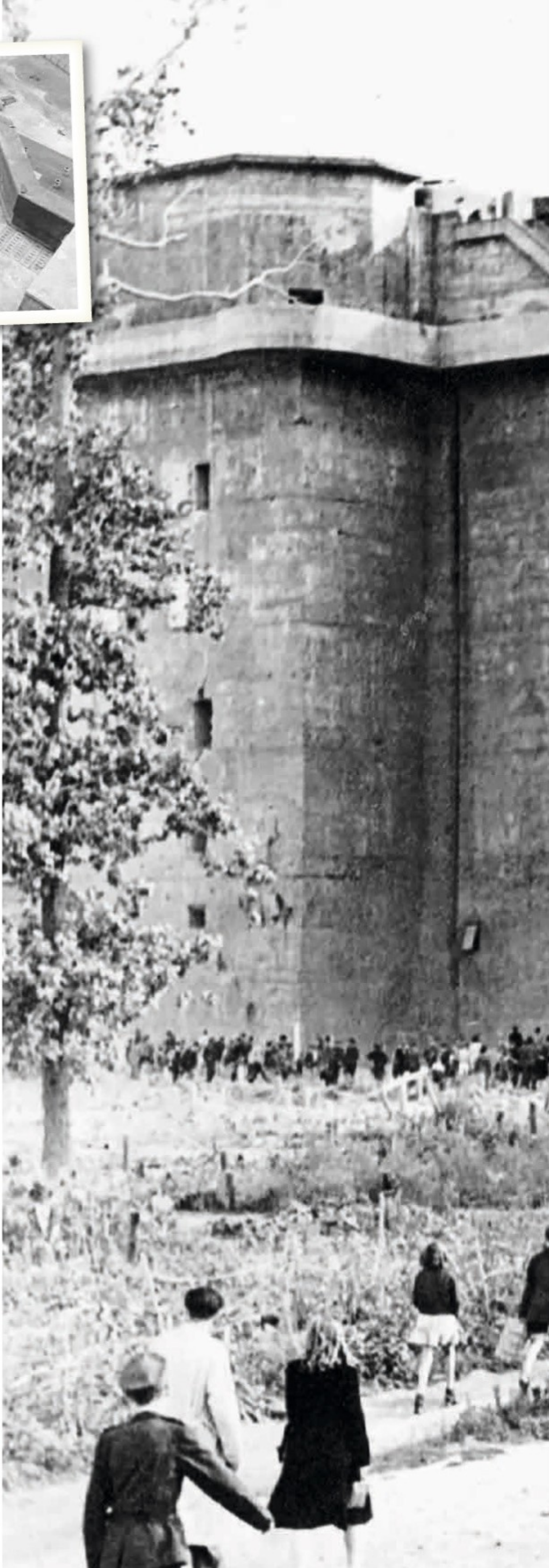
A CLOUD OF DEATH CAME INTO SIGHT

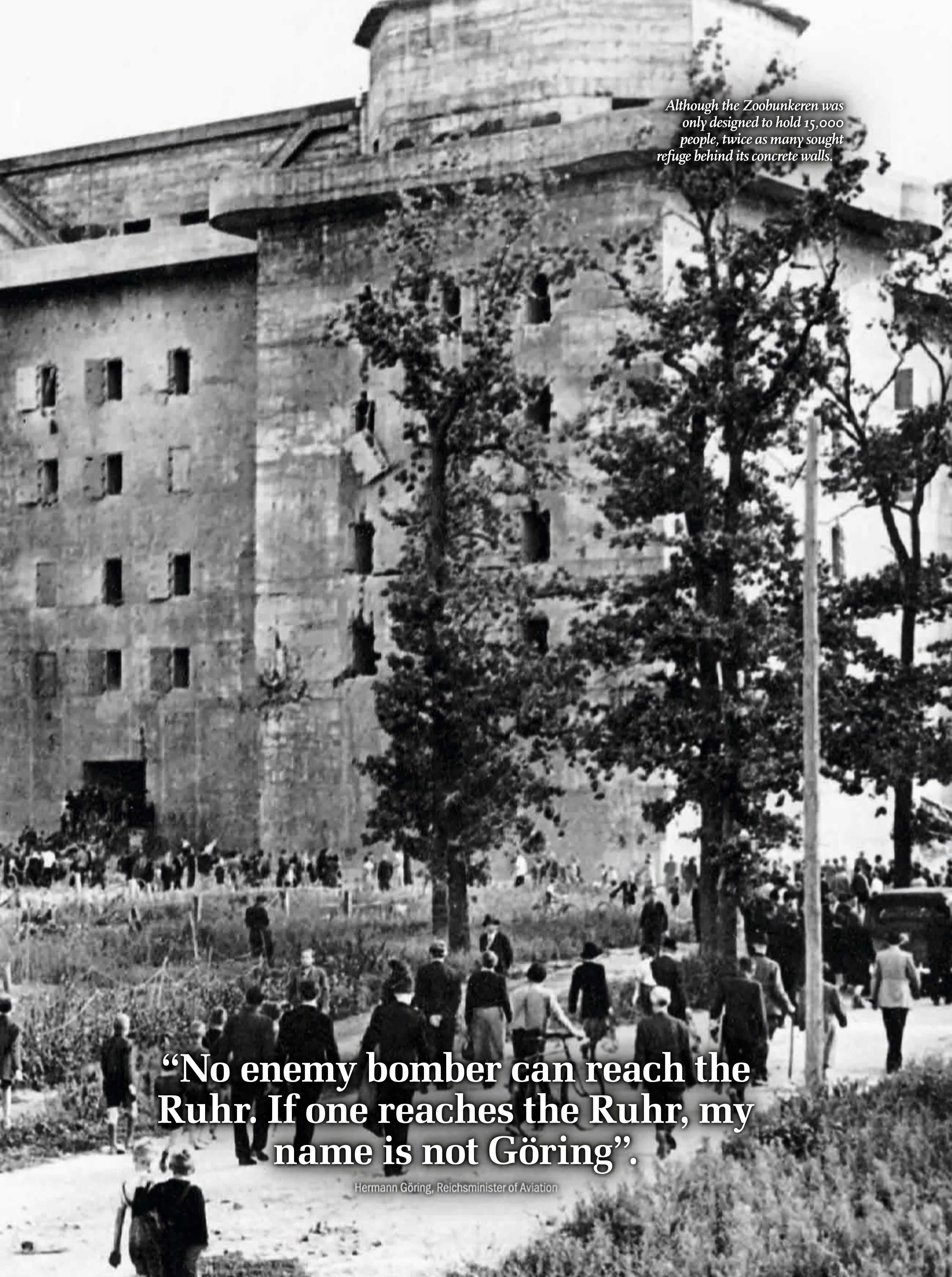
Despite their limited effectiveness, the flak batteries were still a frightening prospect for Allied bombing crews. On 6th March, 1944, US Air Force toggalier (responsible for arming and releasing bombs) and sergeant Melvin Larson experienced Berlin up close. From his space in the glass cage under the nose of his B-17 bomber, he observed the flak from the capital from a distance.

"As we neared Berlin, it looked as if the whole city was covered with a thick, black cloud that kept discharging huge, red fireballs of death-dealing shrapnel. This ugly shroud of death was waiting for us. I had never seen flak so thick. The bombers ahead of the formation seemed engulfed in the black cloud as they flew into the exploding flak area", Larson wrote in his war diary later.

Despite heavy barrage from both of the flak towers' twin guns

A special badge was given to flak unit soldiers.





Although the Zoobunkeren was only designed to hold 15,000 people, twice as many sought refuge behind its concrete walls.

> “No enemy bomber can reach the Ruhr. If one reaches the Ruhr, my name is not Göring”.
>
> Hermann Göring, Reichsminister of Aviation

Tower gave guns free shots

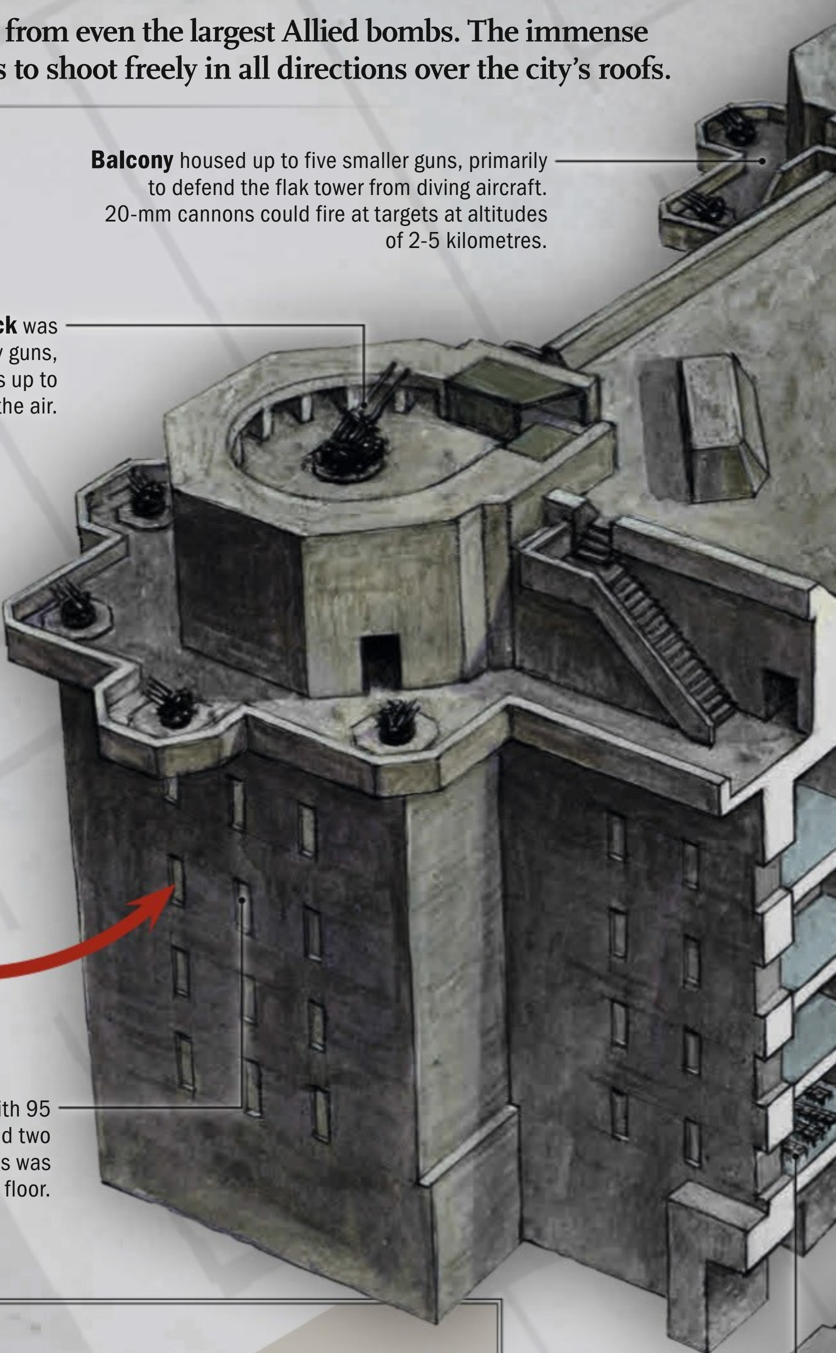
A flak tower was designed to withstand direct hits from even the largest Allied bombs. The immense seven-storey building allowed four powerful guns to shoot freely in all directions over the city's roofs.

FACTS

EXPENSIVE CONCRETE BOXES

- Width: 70.5 metres
- Height: 39 metres
- Ceiling thickness: 3.5 metres
- Wall thickness: 2.5 metres
- Main Armament: 4 x 128-millimetre cannons
- Secondary reinforcement: 20 x 20-millimetre cannons
- Cost: 45 million Reichsmarks (RM) per tower*

**In comparison, all the Berlin Olympics facilities cost 27m RM.*



Balcony housed up to five smaller guns, primarily to defend the flak tower from diving aircraft. 20-mm cannons could fire at targets at altitudes of 2-5 kilometres.

The upper deck was reserved for heavy guns, which could fire shells up to 14 kilometres into the air.

A hospital with 95 beds and two operating rooms was on the third floor.

Shelters for 15,000 civilians were arranged in the lower floors, but up to 30,000 took refuge behind the tower walls.

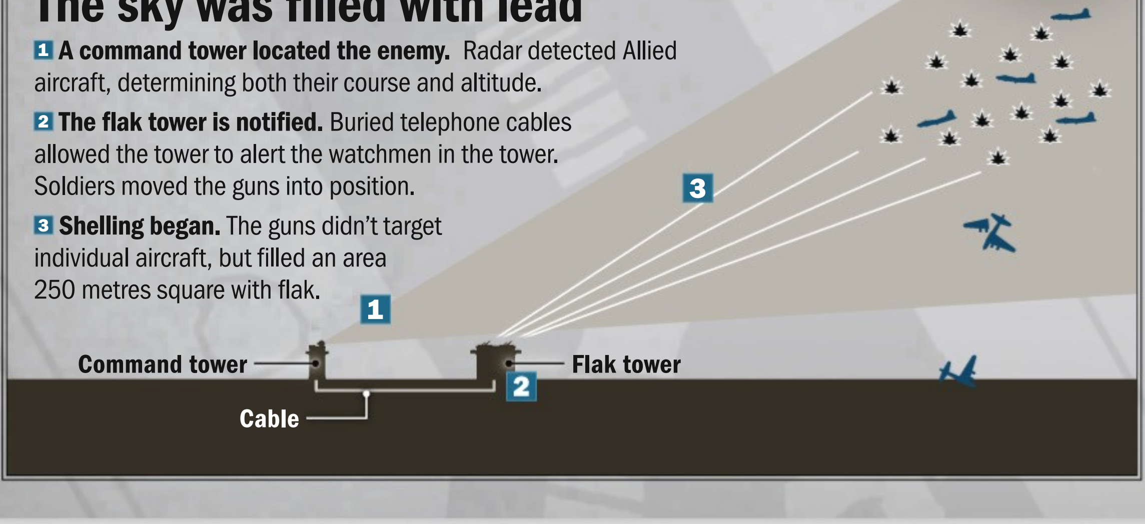
Eight doctors and 20 nurses tended injured soldiers and civilians.

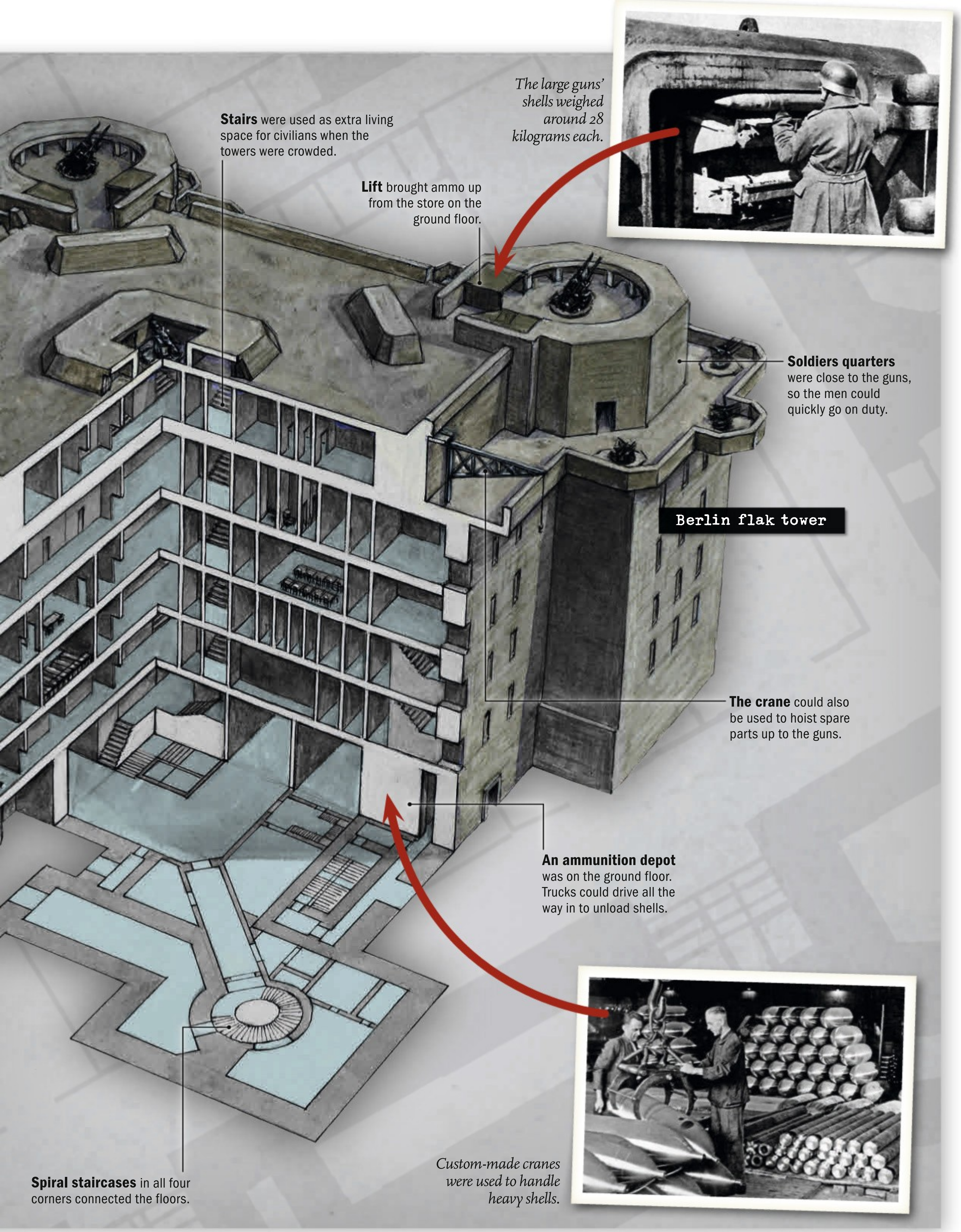
The sky was filled with lead

1 A command tower located the enemy. Radar detected Allied aircraft, determining both their course and altitude.

2 The flak tower is notified. Buried telephone cables allowed the tower to alert the watchmen in the tower. Soldiers moved the guns into position.

3 Shelling began. The guns didn't target individual aircraft, but filled an area 250 metres square with flak.





Berlin flak tower

Stairs were used as extra living space for civilians when the towers were crowded.

Lift brought ammo up from the store on the ground floor.

The large guns' shells weighed around 28 kilograms each.

Soldiers quarters were close to the guns, so the men could quickly go on duty.

The crane could also be used to hoist spare parts up to the guns.

An ammunition depot was on the ground floor. Trucks could drive all the way in to unload shells.

Spiral staircases in all four corners connected the floors.

Custom-made cranes were used to handle heavy shells.

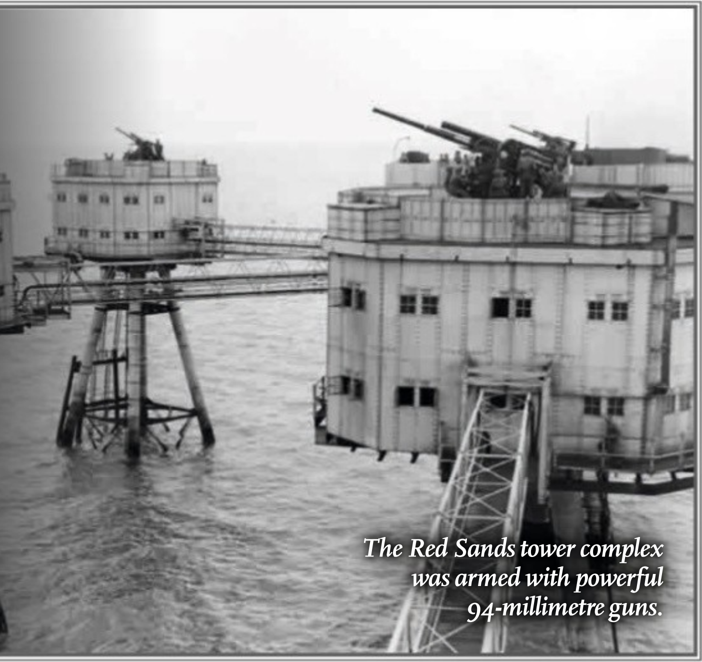
Churchill had towers at sea

British civil engineers placed powerful guns on North Sea towers as a prominent part of southern England's air defences.

The British built a series of towers in the shallow waters of the Thames Estuary that were designed to shoot down German planes before they reached the capital. These Maunsell Forts were named after their creator, engineer Guy Maunsell, and were in operation from 1942 onwards.

Like their German counterparts, the structures weren't particularly effective. Only 22 enemy planes were shot down, although the turret also downed around 30 unmanned V1 missiles and the towers helped warn of incoming air raids.

In the 1960s, the towers were used to broadcast pirate radio to get around the BBC's monopoly on broadcasting from the mainland.



The Red Sands tower complex was armed with powerful 94-millimetre guns.

> **"I caught sight of our first artillerist. He was missing an arm"**
>
> Horst Hirche, 15-year-old flak helper

as well as guns at ground level; Larson was able to drop his bomb over the target area. Several times the plane shook from explosions. The guns didn't target individual planes, but filled the air with flak. Larson observed several aircraft around him: "I could see large, ragged holes appearing on their wings and fuselage. You could hear the flak bouncing off the roof of our aircraft that sounded like hailstones hitting on a metal roof".

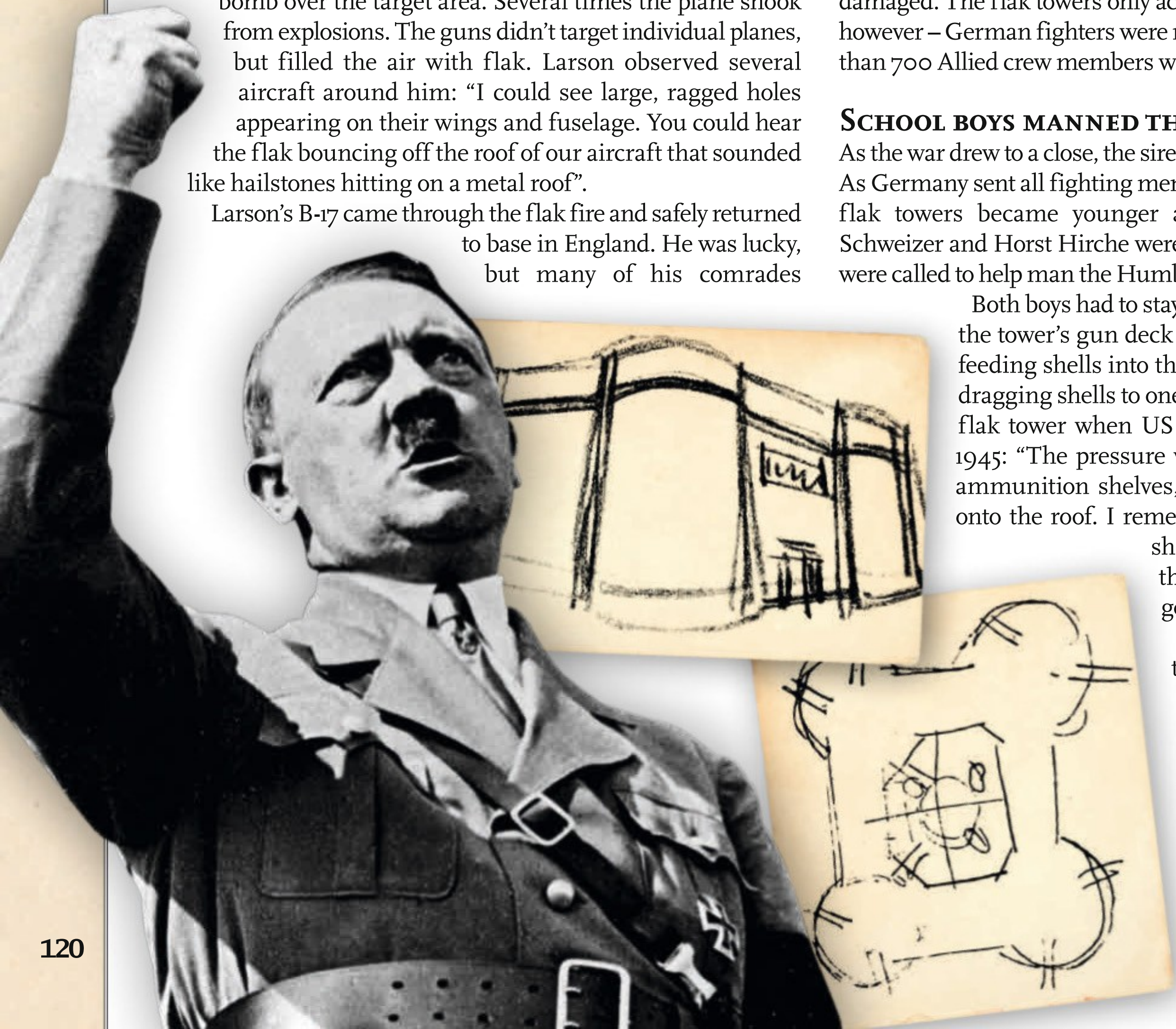
Larson's B-17 came through the flak fire and safely returned to base in England. He was lucky, but many of his comrades weren't. 69 of the 660 bombers were shot down while 250 were damaged. The flak towers only accounted for a few of the hits, however – German fighters were more effective. In total, more than 700 Allied crew members were either killed or captured.

SCHOOL BOYS MANNED THE GUNS

As the war drew to a close, the sirens sounded again and again. As Germany sent all fighting men to the front, the crew in the flak towers became younger and younger. Both Harry Schweizer and Horst Hirche were only 15 years old when they were called to help man the Humboldthain flak tower in 1944.

Both boys had to stay 39 metres above ground on the tower's gun deck during air raids, constantly feeding shells into the hungry guns. Hirche was dragging shells to one of the twin cannons on the flak tower when US bombs hit on 18th March, 1945: "The pressure wave threw me against the ammunition shelves, and afterwards I fell over onto the roof. I remembered all the unexploded shells that were still close to the cannon. If the shells had gone off, it was all over".

Hirche was helped off the top and down to the hospital. "When we reached the hospital, I caught sight of our first artillerist. He was



Hitler's own sketches formed the basis for the design of the flak towers.

missing an arm". Hirche himself lost an eye, and doctors found 14 pieces of shrapnel in his body.

For a long period, the big guns on top of the towers were in an almost daily battle against US and British bombers. But when Russian forces reached Berlin's outskirts in April 1945, they found themselves given a task for which they weren't designed: land war. The twin guns were aimed at ground targets and both Russian tanks and artillery were shelled. But the heavy concrete buildings hadn't been designed to absorb the power of their guns' recoil at a sideways angle.

"When we fired the 128s at clusters of tanks as far out as Tegel, the barrels were down to zero degrees and the shock waves were enough to break the cement of the 70-cm high and 50-cm wide parapet of the gallery five metres below, exposing the steel rods beneath", recalled Schweizer.

30,000 HID BEHIND THE WALLS

As the Russians advanced, the flak towers filled with homeless people and terrified civilians. Zoobunkeren was built to house 15,000 people, but by the end of the war 30,000 Berliners crammed together behind its thick concrete walls. The sheer numbers soon broke the flak tower's toilets, forcing people to relieve themselves where they sat.

At the same time, wounded soldiers arrived directly from fighting on the street. The tower hospital amputated arms and legs, but because no one could move freely outside, the severed limbs were stored in buckets in the hospital corridors.

Some of the wounded died in bed, and the bodies also started piling up in the corridors where suicides were common – especially among those afraid of falling into Soviet hands. The stench of death, sweat and faeces hung in the air. The steel shutters on the windows could no longer be opened because it would give the Russians a target.

Outside conditions were just as bad, and anyone who ventured out to search for food or relatives was greeted by the macabre sight of the bombed-out zoo.

"Several of the bombs fell in a large basin in which there are pelicans and other seabirds, it is 20 metres away from us. We get a powerful splash from it… some of the large birds, which had been thrown into the air, start falling dead around us. A large brown bear in a cage is bleeding heavily… and roared and bellowed from the pain", soldier Arno Pentzien recalled.

Even though the Russians had halted their advance because of heavy fire from the air defence guns, the towers were no more than an awkward obstacle. The Soviets simply detoured via roads the towers' guns couldn't reach.

By late April the Russians were close enough for soldiers to shoot directly at the flak towers with field artillery, yet even their heaviest weapons caused only minor damage to the concrete walls. Neither could their shells penetrate the steel shutters.

Only when the Soviets targeted the shutters' hinges were they able to break through: "A shell entered the room and killed two people, so the room was cleared and further hits there were to no avail. The passage ways behind the outer rooms were so designed that nothing could happen", said Schweizer.

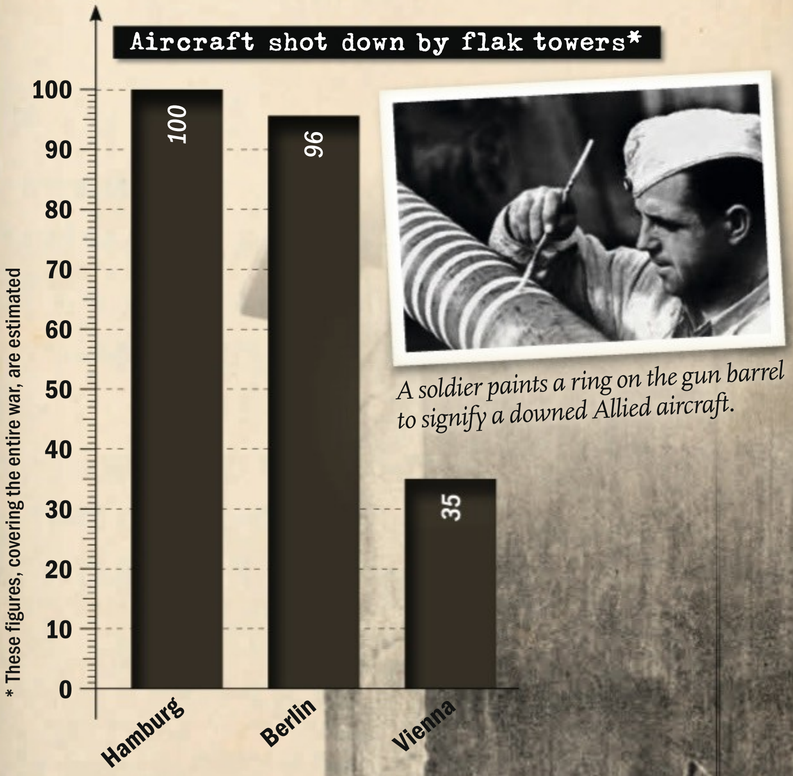
Zoobunkeren finally surrendered on 2nd May at 12.30. The soldiers also gave up the hopeless struggle in the other two flak towers. After Berlin's capitulation, the city was in ruins: cars, buildings and monuments all destroyed. But Hitler's invulnerable flak towers were still virtually undamaged.

Guns were ineffective

Flak tower guns fired thousands of shells for each enemy bomber they shot down.

Otto Wilhelm von Renz, who was a general in the German flak artillery, calculated that the towers fired 3,000 shells per downed aircraft. These poor results were largely down to the fact pilots quickly discovered the position of flak towers and learned to avoid ending up in range of their guns. At the same time, British and US aircraft dropped aluminium foil strips, which confused the gun control's radar.

Bombers escaped the towers



A soldier paints a ring on the gun barrel to signify a downed Allied aircraft.

Allied planes were usually too far away for the towers' balcony guns to hit.

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Hitler arms Germany for war

When Adolf Hitler re-introduced military conscription in 1935, he claimed it was "a wonderful education" for Germany's youth. It was also part of the dictator's preparations for war. In 1936, almost half of all public expenditure went on the military. Two years later, in 1938, Austria succumbed to Hitler's ambitions without a shot being fired as its citizens voted to become part of a Greater Germany in the Anschluss referendum. The following year, the Führer took Czechoslovakia and Poland, then he turned west. As the Great Powers scrambled to respond, the Nazi war machine stormed through Belgium and France using its new blitzkrieg tactics. Europe was on its knees and the Jews faced extinction...

NEW WEAPONS
Hitler forced Europe to rearm
Air support determined the success of the army
Tanks became effective killing machines
Organ played death music
Submarines were feared in the oceans
Four phases secured
PHASE 1
PHASE 2
PHASE 3
Piercing the defence
Attacking deep
"The Wehrmacht [considered] that the SS was simply a bunch of unruly thugs"

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